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# STERN INFLUENCE IN BENGALI LITERATURE

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PUBLISHED BY THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

1932

PRINTED BY BHUPENDRALAL BANERJI  
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA

Reg. No. 666B—September, 1932—E.

To  
The Memory of  
SIR ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE,  
who laid the foundation of the study  
of Indian Vernaculars in the  
University of Calcutta.





WESTERN INFLUENCE IN BENGALI  
LITERATURE



## PREFACE

The subject " Western Influence in Bengali Literature " is of general interest for the student of modern Bengali life; it has also a special interest for those who study the cultural exchange between one nation and another. When the syllabus for the M.A. Examination in Indian Vernaculars was first framed in 1917 for the Calcutta University, it was thought important enough to be included in the course. My theses on the subject, " Western Influence in Bengali Literature," and " Growth and Development of Bengali Literature under the Influence of Western Culture " were approved for the Premchand Roychand Studentship in 1925 and the Jubilee Research Prize in 1927, and they have been embodied in the present volume.

The materials for this aspect of the literary history of Bengal in the nineteenth century are to be found in many out-of-the-way places; periodicals, books and other publications that were printed then and have grown scarce now, constitute specimens for analysis and scrutiny. The Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Library, the libraries at Uttarpara, Konnagar and Serampore College, the files of the *Tattvabodhinī* and the *Indian Mirror*, have been laid under contribution for this purpose, and I take this opportunity to express my thanks for the courtesy shown to me by the authorities concerned. The objection, that it is not yet time to work on the lines

covered by this book for paucity of materials, is not worth serious consideration; for sufficient materials are available to justify a systematic study.

I have tried to consider the influence in its historical bearings, as far as possible; my aim has been to note the main results achieved and to make the study comprehensive, rather than elaborate. In the majority of cases, I have given English translation of my own of Bengali passages cited in the book, and for Bengali verses I have given corresponding English versions, without committing the absurdity of versifying in English. In the transcription of proper names, I have tried to be consistent without seriously disturbing the convention.

My sincere thanks are due to my colleagues, friends and students who have helped in looking over the proof-sheets and preparing the index; to Mr. A. C. Ghatak, M.A., Superintendent, Calcutta University Press, and his Staff, for their sympathetic co-operation; and to my friends, Professor Pramatha Nath Sarkar, M.A., of the City College, Calcutta, and S. J. Brajendra Nath Banerji, whose suggestions were helpful in various ways.

ASUTOSH BUILDING,

*September, 1932.*

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PRIYARANJAN SEN.

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# WESTERN INFLUENCE IN BENGALI LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I

### Bengali Literature before Western Influence

#### *1. An Introductory Survey.*

In the history of Bengal, the present century of the Christian era is invested with great importance, indicating as it does a landmark in the growth and development of the country, which has secured to it recognition and a place of honour in the world, in art, in literature, and in the natural sciences. A general cultural renaissance seems to have been brought about. In the face of the achievements, it is necessary to scrutinise and examine carefully the tendencies of thought and the literary expressions of the people of the province, and to ascertain, in relation to the past, how far the present conditions have been brought about by influences operating from outside. Bengal and England—the interplay of their tendencies and currents of thought—rather, the latter influencing the former—present a curious sight for the critic and student of culture. The facts are indeed striking. In the Census Report for 1921 we find this comment :

“ It is indeed remarkable that in a country where but 18 per cent of the males aged 5 and over

can read and write their own language as many as 3·4 per cent should have acquired as much proficiency also in a foreign language. Yet this is the case in Bengal.\*.....Bengalis educated in English appreciate the facilities which the language gives them, especially in the expression of abstract ideas and in common speech they lard their conversation in Bengali with a plethora of English abstract nouns."† This reflects, in a manner, that the greatest change wrought in the Bengali temper during the last century has been due to various extraneous influences marshalled and brought to bear upon it. There has been a transformation, of far-reaching import it may be, quick and sudden even if we think in terms of centuries. This change in the angle of vision has roused interest in writers and thinkers. Speculation has been rife as to the ultimate outcome of this impact. Lord Ronaldshay remarks that the issue is "of incalculable importance to mankind. Its study is of absorbing interest and is too large a subject to be undertaken here."‡

✓It has been assumed by some that the east is in most respects, if not all, inferior to the west, and that westernisation is the goal towards which Bengal should move. It has been assumed again that the east is spiritually superior to the west, that India is "the cradle of the human faith and thought;" "the old spirit of India is dead; we are a decaying race, and the materialism of the west has hastened this decay." Some are emphatically of opinion that the two are as asunder as the poles in all ideals

\* Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p. 296.

† *Ibid.*, p. 298.

‡ A Bird's Eye View of India, p. 115.

of life ; while others, and among them the greatest thinkers, have asserted that we should adopt the learning of the west but retain the ideals of the east. “ Western civilisation, however valuable as a factor in the progress of mankind, should not supersede, much less be permitted to destroy the vital elements of our civilisation.”\* Some have remarked that this westernisation is a passing phase while others believe in the permanency of such contribution of the west. While admitting the partial truths that underlie all the above apparently hasty generalisations, we cannot but point to a fact so apt to be lost sight of in the midst of such controversies, and that is, the breath of life passes over and moulds both the east and the west.

One of the ways to measure the result of this contact is to turn to literature, which is an organ of expression of the national mind, sure though subtle in its working. To understand and study and appreciate either the literature which is one of the invaluable tests of culture or the culture itself, it is necessary to take stock of the forces that have been at work. The influence of the west has worked on the vernacular literature and left some tangible results which it will be our task here in this essay to ascertain and weigh.

The subject has long attracted thinkers ; the late Mr. Barada Charan Mitra of the Bengal Judicial Service, himself a scholar and poet, had written an article on the influence of English Literature on Bengali in the *Calcutta Review* as early as 1885 ; Sir (then Mr.) Brajendra Nath Seal in his *New Essays*

\* Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, Convocation Address, March, 1922.

*in Criticism* also touched upon it; Sasanka Mohan Sen in his *Baṅgabānī* incidentally dwells on it. Sayyid Abdul Latif of the Osmania University, Hyderabad, had worked out his thesis for the doctorate in the University of London on the analogous subject of the influence of English upon Urdu Literature. Nor should we allow ourselves to forget Mr. P. N. Bose's remarkable book *Hindu Civilisation under British Rule*, more particularly the third volume which deals with the Intellectual condition of Hindu India under British Rule (1896); it is much to be regretted that the learned author's project of the fourth volume dealing with the literary changes was not put in execution; the fact remains that the subject has not been systematically and with any degree of thoroughness investigated, and this want is sought to be supplied here.

The task would have been easy if the different threads that make up literature could be unravelled without much difficulty; but it is a matter of experience that the threads are not so easy to untwist. So far as Bengal is concerned, the history of the country has yet to be reconstructed. There is no properly constituted history of the pre-Pathan period. The edifice of history is to be built brick by brick and such bricks are to be procured from literature, from inscriptions, from other sources, whatever these might be. No doubt attempts have been made, and will be made, in this direction; but the final success of such attempts is still a long way off. The step from wild guesses to positive knowledge is fraught with various entanglements. When we deal with the nineteenth century and after—the period which we want to study—we tread, however,

on firmer ground and for the purpose of this essay we need not be deterred by the lack of a comprehensive and detailed history of the country, however useful such a knowledge might be. Bengal has not merely come in contact with England; it is the case of the infusion or accession of new force and strength through this contact with the literature, the thoughts of England. With regard to the statement that India has not yet emerged out of this foreign influence, it may be pertinently asked, Is India still in transition? Apart from the fact that each age has its own valuations to make and that few estimates are to be considered as final, it may still be asked, Is she still so much—so very much—in transition as to baffle scrutiny, examination and analysis? After 150 years of English domination, Bengal may be believed to have developed her own tendencies and overgrown, to a certain extent at least, the tutelage of England in the domain of culture.

We propose in this essay to find out, first of all, the general characteristics of the Bengali literature, just as they were, prior to its westernisation. Unless we find out these, we do not know the material on which the influence has worked, and consequently cannot measure or form a correct idea of such influence. When we have taken this first step, have ascertained the general characteristics of old and mediæval Bengali literature, it will be our business to point out how the thoughts and expressions and ideas of the west filled the national mind, in short; the gateways or rather the channels of influence should then be explored. Only then may we hope to indicate the results of western influence with as



much sureness of touch as possible when speaking of literature or any other art which is subtle in its working. Literature, only for the purpose of analysis and criticism, may be viewed as made up of form and spirit; and if there has been, really speaking, any tangible result, it may relate either to form or to spirit or to both, and we are under the necessity of examining both. As regards form, again, works may be either in prose or in verse, and we can turn first to one and then to the other in our investigations. As regards the literary spirit, we may take up one by one the attitude of the particular literature in reference to man, to nature, to God or religion and the results of our enquiry will give us an idea as to the extent of the influence of the western thought, and unfold to our view the growth or development of Bengali literature under the influence of western culture.

## *II. Characteristics of Bengali Literature previous to Western Influence.*

Before, then, we can determine or even investigate into the possible western influence on the literature of Bengal, it is incumbent on us to find out its general characteristics prior to the operation of any such influence. For this purpose it is certainly not necessary to range through the vast region of Bengali literature from the earliest period to the nineteenth century; our purpose will be served if, in this world of changing tastes and fashions, we keep our attention confined to books that have a permanent literary value, for they tell us of things that proceed from the heart of the nation. Let us ignore

the froth and dive deep and look to things that really matter, and then we shall find that the minor tendencies we may safely overlook, only the major we cannot but notice and attend to. The chronology of Bengali books, however, has not yet been made out with precision and accuracy, but even that need not hamper us in our study of the subject; we are not just now tracing the history of Bengali literature, rigorously employed in observing the proper sequence of authors, books and movements; we are merely concerned here with finding out its dominant characteristics before it was subjected to the western influence and developed tendencies which it had not yet possessed.

In the first place, it is to be noticed that what dominates old and mediæval Bengali literature is *the note of religion*. *Shūnyapurān*, one of the earliest books,\* is modelled on the scriptures or rather books of religious procedure, of religious rites, and is also a combination of history and theology. *Krishna-kīrtan* contains snatches of real poetry and is mainly erotic from end to end; but even this has recourse to the *Bhāgarat* and its mythology for its framework. Then again, the Vaishnav works which occupy the major portion of the field breathe a lofty air far removed from this work-a-day world. Numerous are the works of noble sentiment and pious devotion composed by Vaishnavs in elegant verse, even to name them is a considerable task; but they are explicitly meant to preach and extol the name of

\* An examination of the book reveals it to have been composed by different authors and at different times, the earliest stretching to c. 13th cent.—Prof. J. C. Ray, p. 93, *Sahitya-Parishat-Patrika*, Vol. 38.

God and to explain divine love in their own way. The Mangal Kavyas, which next claim attention, have a definite purpose to serve, to introduce and propagate a certain cult, and this motive is apparent on the surface. Sometimes there are elaborate invocations, sometimes there are none. In the *Chandīmangal* by Kavikankan published by the Calcutta University, as many as one hundred and six pages are occupied with invocations and cosmogony. There are salutations in verse offered to Ganesh, Suryya, Srichaitanya, Mahadev, Chandi, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Shukadev and again to Ganesh, this one running parallel to the first invocation. It is an extreme instance no doubt, but none the less a strong indication of the prevailing tendency. Away from the invocations, when we have dipped into the volume we find that there is something common in the plot and motive ; that somebody of divine origin—Indra's son or follower of, say, Durga—has been born as man or woman through some curse and at the expiry of the period limiting the curse, his or her return to heaven is assured ; life on earth is but an episode, always with some definite object which is accomplished in the end. This feature of the Mangal Kavyas is to be seen even in such a professedly worldly book as *Vidyāsundar*. At the very end of the book when Sundar went home with the bride Vidya and paid meet adoration to the goddess Kali, she appeared before him and said to the couple :

তোরা মোর দাস দাসী      শাপেতে ভূতলে আসি  
আমার মঙ্গল প্রকাশি।

ব্রত হইল পরকাশ

এবে চল স্বর্গবাস

নানামিত আমারে তুষিলা ॥ \*

“ You are my servants, man and maid, born to this earth through a curse, and you have published my *mangal* song (established my beneficence). The worship has found publicity ; now come to live in heaven, you have satisfied me in various ways.”

Then, at the end or sometimes in the beginning of a poem, there are informations about the family and lineage of the poet and it all concludes with a prayer for the well-being of the poet and his descendants :

শিবরাম বংশধর

কৃপা কর মহেশ্বর

রক্ষ পুত্রে পৌত্রে ত্রিনয়ান

( কবিকঙ্কণ চণ্ডী, প্রথম ভাগ, পৃঃ ২৪ ;

কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত )

“ Bless, O Great God, the descendant of Sivaram ; O Three-eyed, protect his sons and grandsons.”

The metaphysical portion is an occasional feature ; it dwells on how the world was evolved or rather created out of the primal elements, it treats of the Adideva and the Adidevi, mahat, ahamkara, panchabhuta, and so on and on till, in the *Chandī-mangal* (Kavikankan), we get to Daksha and his abusing Siva and the consequent rout of his party. The impulse to write in verse is a divine call, the poet feels ignorant and shy and then there is a vision

\* *Bhāratchandrer Granthāvalī* (Basumati edition), p. 112.

and in the vision he receives commands, *e.g.*, in the *Annadāmangal* :

অন্নপূর্ণা ভারতেরে রজনীর শেষে ।  
 স্বপন কহিলা মাতা তার মাতৃবেশে ॥  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 মোর ইচ্ছা গীতে তুমি তোষহ আমারে ॥  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 অন্নদা কহিল বাছা না করিহ ভয় ।  
 আমার রূপার বলে বোবা কথা কয় ॥  
 গ্রন্থ আরস্তিয়া মোর রূপা সাক্ষী পাবে ।  
 যে কবে সে হবে গীত আনন্দে শিখাবে ॥  
 এত বলি অমৃতান্ন মুখে তুলি দিগা ।  
 সেই বলে এই গীত ভারত রচিলা ॥ \*

“ At the end of the night, Mother Annapurna spoke to Bharat in a dream and in the guise of his mother..... ‘ I wish you to give me pleasure by song.’ .....Annada said, ‘ My son, do not be afraid, the dumb speaks through my grace. You will witness my blessing as you begin the book ; whatever you will say will be a song, you will be taught in joy.’ Saying this, she took up *Amrita* food and fed him with it ; by the strength of that Bharat composed this poem.”

Thus we find that in the invocation, in the outline or plot of the story, in the motive, in the cosmogony, even in the poet’s calling, the note of piety and religion is to be heard clear and unmistakable, compelling attention in spite of the realistic elements in the books.

As the religious texts were mostly composed in Sanskrit, it is no wonder that the *influence of the classical language* should be felt in the vernacular. The fact of the case warrants more than this, due partly to the presence of excellent literary models in the older language. For the most part the mediæval literature grew up under the fostering care and genial influence of Sanskrit. How many of the books are translations, sometimes of the letter and sometimes of the thought contained in Sanskrit books! Even if we except the *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat*, what about the numerous translations or amplifications of verses from the *Bhāgavat*! *Srīkrishnavilās*, *Srīkrishnavijay*, *Srīkrishnamangal* (by Madhabacharyya), *Govindamangal* (Kavi-chandra), *Krishnamangal* (Jiban Chakravarti) all enumerated by Amulyacharan Vidyabhushan in his preface to *Srīkrishnavilās*,\* are merely a few names to reckon with. Some again take their plot from Sanskrit story books, *e.g.*, *Mrigalubdha-Samvād* by Ram Raja—preface, page 5, or *Mrigalubdha* by Dvija Ratideva—preface, page 3. “The story of *Mrigalubdha* is merely an adaptation of some Sanskrit book.”

The Vaishnav poets contribute in no small degree to the excellence of the literary output but many of their *padas* are striking examples of the rhetorical definitions contained in noted Sanskrit books on *Alamkara*. Such terms as খণ্ডিতা ধীরা মধ্যা, খণ্ডিতা অধীরা মধ্যা, খণ্ডিতা ধীরাধীরা মধ্যা, কলহান্তরিতা, etc., have been amply illustrated in their various shades of meaning and setting, regularly and

thoroughly, as in a Sanskrit treatise on rhetorical devices. Old Bengali writers turned to Sanskrit for source and inspiration, used Sanskrit mottoes and there are frequent reminiscences or echoes of classical phrases. In the *Krishnakīrtan*, for example, we find two or four lines of Sanskrit verse set in here and there to add a point or embellish, though with doubtful effect and though there is very little variety in the turn-out of such lines. Sometimes the tendency ran to extremes, resulting in forced constructions. *Srī Srī Chaitanya Charitāmrita* by Krishнадas Kaviraj begins with a string of fifteen verses or *slokas* composed in Sanskrit, and the first few chapters are fully spent in elucidating and explaining them. The learned author quotes freely from all classes of books—the references are given by him—the *Bhāgarat*, Sridhara Swami's commentary thereto,—*Brahmasamhitā*, *Ekādashītattva*, *Vidagdhamādhava*, *Gītā*, *Bhācārthadīpikā*, *Bhaktirasāmritasindhu*, *Ujjvalanīlamani*, *Vishnupurān*, *Bṛihad-Gautamīya-tantra*, *Gorinda-Līlāmrita*, *Lalitāmādhava* and many others. The very plan is Sanskritic, *e.g.*, on page 2, *Bangabasi* edition, we get

সে যজ্ঞাচরণ হয় ত্রিবিধ প্রকার ।

বস্তুনির্দেশ, আশীর্বাদ, নমস্কার ॥

This is in strict conformity with the practice in Sanskrit books, and the principle enunciated here is a Bengali rendering of the statement in Sanskrit, too well known to require repetition. Thus we find that the stamp of Sanskrit is clear on the vernacular literature. All things considered, this influence has proved a helpful asset to the cause of the vernacular.

May not *the comparative lack of prose* in old and mediæval Bengali be traced to the influence of Sanskrit, where also prose works are disproportionately few? It is true no doubt that the *pada-rasa-sār* \* of Nimananda Das has prose *padas* along with verses; in the *Shūnyapurān* we have here and there lines in prose serving as links; in this connection it will not be out of place to say that such insertions of short fragments of prose were in evidence in popular Sanskrit works like the *Mahābhārat* and in vogue in Indo-Iranian times, and are also to be found in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, in the verse scriptures of the Buddhists as well as in the Gathas of the Parsis. Prof. Meillet in his lecture on the composition of the Gathas, delivered in 1925 at the Upsala University, remarked on this feature of the literature of the times and suggested an explanation :

“ The Buddhist style of composition, in prose for the explanations, in verse for all that which is expressive and proper to be formulated with force, is not the only thing of its kind in the Indo-European world. It is an old usage which is found again and again.” † Some Sahajīya works were written in prose; in his *Introduction to the Study of the Post-Chaitanya Sahajīyā Cult* (Calcutta University, 1927) Mr. Manindra Mohan Bose has given a valuable bibliography of Sahajīya literature. Of the 79 books named and described there, 14 are in prose; *e.g.*, *Gunātmikā*, Chandidas’ *Chaitya-Rūpa-Prāpti*; *Upāsanā-patal*, etc. It should be noted here that all these Sahajīya books that have been considered

\* *Sāhitya-Parishat-Patrikā*, 1321 B.S.

† Meillet, *Avestan Gathas* (Tr. by Sen), p. 26.



by Mr. Bose were concerned with philosophical, theological or ritual matter, and were post-Chaitanya in date; the remembrance of this should bring in the right perspective and then it would appear how few in proportion these Sahajiya prose works were. This establishes more firmly than ever that the prevailing form was verse, not prose, in old and mediæval Bengali.

All literatures are in their earliest stage musical, spontaneous, without any consciousness of literature as such. They have no idea of their own growth. The historical sense has not grown to them in that stage. Hence criticism has always been but a late growth of the literary faculty. In English literature we come upon criticism of a most rudimentary sort only in the 16th century, and not earlier; the previous works do not deal with any literary development. Bengali is no exception to this general state of things and it does not attain to the self-reflecting or critical stage before it has come under western influence and stood before various literary models other than its own. There is a considerable amount of descriptive, narrative, biographical, and even theological writings in the 18th century and before, but not critical. It had not then come to a position from which it might view itself as literature, pure and simple. The conception of a history of literature or of what may be termed literary growth or development was unknown to it and consideration of literary movements would have been an impossible task. It may be suggested that its religious nature had partly stood in the way of the growth of this critical faculty. This does by no means overlook the faculty of criticism, which

makes itself evident in the selection, compilation and preparation of the *padas* of various poets in the hands of scribes and individual men of letters. But that amounts to saying that the critical faculty is never wholly absent for long in any literature and it does not explain away the absence of works of literary criticism in the language. It might be that here also Sanskrit works of a cognate nature, still holding the ground for their thoroughness and subtlety in their grasp of the principles of literary criticism, did not allow this want to be felt much. In this connection we have also to admit that the invocations prefacing the works of the poets in general and addressed to their predecessors in the art reveal a certain amount of historical and critical sense. When all this is said, the fact remains that comparatively speaking, Bengali literature, even so late as the first half of the nineteenth century, was deficient in works of literary criticism, historically tracing the growth of Bengali literature or any part of it, discussing any particular work or any individual author, or dealing with the philosophical treatment of literature in general.

Old and mediæval Bengali seems to have been considered inferior to Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian, which were thought to be languages of culture and were meant for the higher classes. *Prākṛita* or *Parākṛita* is the term applied to the vernacular, in the sense that it was meant for the common folk. This presents a parallel to the case in Europe where Latin was the honoured language and the vernaculars were relegated to a secondary place. Even now the trammels of classicism and the influence of classical literature are hard to shake off in certain

parts of Europe. Hence all religious reformers, specially those who sought to create a new faith, looked to the vernacular for propaganda purpose, and it was long before it could claim equal attention with the classical language. Thus each religious movement in Bengal synchronised with a period of literary activity in the vernacular tongue. The contact with the western literatures widened the outlook still further, though it must be confessed with a brief spell of enchantment when it was thought the proper thing even to dream in English; but at last Bengali literature has been invested with an importance which it lacked before.

In contrast to the Sanskritic domination, but united in language, in sentiment and in method of composition to the main currents of old and mediæval Bengali literature, stands out the folk-literature, the ballad literature of the country which sings of the weal and woe of the people—their freedom in the choice of their mates, the oppression of the poor by the rich, the intense devotion of the wife to the husband, the sudden conversion of wicked men through contact with a person of saintly character. Many of the ballads are brilliant poetic achievements, written in a straightforward style and shedding a light on the village communities of Bengal, the light of poetic imagination. The discovery of these ballads is a distinct contribution to our knowledge of Bengali literature as it flourished in the dark corners of the country. This ballad literature has not been thoroughly explored as yet, but judging by the *Mymensingh Ballads* which might serve for a specimen, or even considering these ballads by themselves as forming

a distinct branch of Bengali literature, we are entitled to believe in its existence and to form some idea of its nature. While speaking of the Sanskrit influence on the literature of Bengal in the pre-British days, it is but reasonable to point out that there is thus the possibility of a vast literature in the country almost entirely free from it and originating in the spontaneous impulse of natural, born poets to sing in verse the remarkable occurrences of the locality in the environment in which they have been born and bred.

However we might thus try to point out the general characteristics of Bengali literature, it is still impossible to point definitely to its essence. The community which could sometimes in its career evolve a new system of logic, a new system of social jurisprudence, a new doctrine of philosophy, a new aspect of the Vaishnav faith, could hardly fail to be critical in its outlook, though few were the occasions when that critical spirit expressed itself in literature. Bengali literature in those days—how did it reflect the Bengali spirit as an expression of the Bengali community? The answer is yet to come—from the future student who would study Bengali literature in close relation to the group of people speaking the language. Meanwhile we have to be satisfied to guide ourselves by the light of the general characteristics referred to above.

Coming close to the period just before western influence began to act, if we review the century just preceding the period of western influence, we find that as we leave the 18th century behind us we feel the presence in the literary region of a certain spirit of decadence though there is much brilliance

in it. The acknowledged master is Bharatchandra (1712-60), the prince of those who have perfect control over the machinery of words, in whose hands the words sway and tremble, but the theme reveals the decadent nature within; only the corruptions of the society are treated as fit subjects for representation. There was again a period of glory for Nabadwip,—in the construction of the temples, in the finances of the state, in the prosperity of the clay-modelling industries and also of the weaving industries. And the Bengali muse is busy rolling out verses descriptive of the physical charms of beautiful maidens! The fault lay in having recourse to exaggerated descriptions so much so that sometimes the wood was apt to be lost in the trees and the charms heaped upon one another failed to create life, to present a vivid impression of the beautiful person intended to be depicted. Poets vied with one another in dressing out the story of Vidya and Sundar. The Sanskrit poets were themselves restrained in the use of similes, but their disciples writing in the vernacular wanted to improve upon them and laid the colours thick so as to smudge the picture. Literature of the period mainly consisted in the courtly poetry breathed in the atmosphere of the Nabadwip Court and translated into writing by Bharatchandra, though the lightness of his touch and some of his other excellences—his literary tricks, as it were—shine in many of the lightsome, briskly moving verses of the Kaviwallas who stretch even beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. Books like the *Gangābhakti-tarangiṇī* or the *Hari-līlā* were written away from the bustle of the court life, in the quiet of the far-off villages. Kalikrishna

Das (author of the *Kāminī-kumār*) and Rasik-chandra Ray (author of the *Jībantārā*) were powerful followers of Bhāratchandra in the literary art, which filtered down to Kaviwallas like Ram Basu, Ramdulal, Antony Feringee, Gopal Oriya, and the *Pāñchālīs* of Dasu Ray whose life (1804-57) extends far into the period which includes a substantial portion of our studies. Bengali literature can boast of much good poetry composed in these days, but the achievement was in the direction of better mechanism, a freer language rather than anything else, and even the over-ornamented stories of illicit love may be regarded as distinct advances towards secularisation, however disguised by a religious purpose. The songs of Ramprasad, of Nidhu Babu (1741-1834) and of Haru Thakur (1738-1813) point to a period of literary activity of some sort in which the lyric muse winged its flight with little or no impediment, though puns were the favourite figure of speech resorted to.

From what has been said above it will be easy to understand that Bengali literature suffered from great limitations in its subject-matter, in its spirit, no less than in its style of writing—in literary form. The fostering care of religion, the influence of the classical Sanskrit literature, the total absence of works of literary criticism, the practical absence of works of prose,—all these go far to support the statement about its limitations. The comparative decadence in the latter half of the 18th century was due to two reasons: There was a temporary dearth—a lull—of imagination, puns and alliterations were favourite resources, sometimes they formed the entire stock-in-trade of an aspirant after poetic

fame. Again, politically the country was in a tumult and things were unsettled, and no work of any worth had therefore been composed. But this, after all, is a doubtful theory—for political unrest sometimes affects literature, sometimes it does not, and until we find out the reason for the temporary dearth of imagination, we arrive at no reasonable explanation. The decadence is, however, a fact and we have to accept it. At this stage of the literature it had to come in contact with western models and western ideas. The vernacular literature had come across an apparently inexhaustible treasure-house which it could safely draw upon at will with great profit to itself. The poverty of themes and technique was to be removed by the accession of strange wealth, though—who knows?—there would have been some development at least, independent of any extraneous or foreign influence.

### *III. Influences in Bengali Literature other than Western.*

It was not the case that Bengali literature had been wholly untouched by other influences before it came in contact with the west. The Buddhist influence has to be reckoned with, chronologically the first to act. According to MM. Hara Prasad Sastri, at least from 900 A.D. to the invasion of Bengal by the Muhammadans there was a literature in Bengal largely coloured by Buddhistic tendencies. Whether it was Bengali or not is the concern of the philologist; MM. Sastri was of opinion that it was Bengali, and he went still further; he said: “Even the Saiva Yogi sect wrote in Bengali”—which seems a hazardous statement to make, on

account of the paucity of material on which to build and his argument apparently is, that as they wrote in Sanskrit they must have written in Bengali as well. এ কথা সাহস করিয়া বলা যাইতে পারে যে, তাঁহারা যেমন সংস্কৃতের পুস্তক লিখিয়াছেন. তেমনি বাঙ্গালায়ও অনেক পুস্তক লিখিয়াছেন। (সম্বোধন, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ-পত্রিকা, ১৩২৩।)

“The statement may be ventured that they must have written many books in Bengali, just as they have written books in Sanskrit.” He definitely mentions a book in Bengali *Varnanaratnākar*—The Art of Description—written by the poet Jyotirīśvar Kavikāṇachāryya who attended the court of Raja Hari Sinha of Mithila in 1300. Until we have the book in print we cannot say anything in reference to its contents and nature. With regard to the Buddhistic tendencies and their influence on Bengali literature, it still remains to be established that the Bengali language had then emerged out of its *prākṛitic* stage and the help of the philologist is indispensably necessary in discussing the question. We are no doubt quite free in holding that there were Buddhistic tendencies influencing the Bengali mind and the questions which arise in this connection are :

- (i) How long had Bengal been a country name?
- (ii) How old is Bengali language and literature?
- (iii) What are these Buddhistic tendencies that have influenced the Bengali literature, as asserted by some scholars?



(i) The word *Vanga* if not mentioned in the Vedic Samhitas and early Vedic literature still occurs in the *Atharva Veda Parishishta*, in conjunction with the word *Magadha* ; but in the later Vedic literature such as the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned by itself as a country held by a barbarian tribe ; it has struck many scholars with surprise that in spite of the fact that Magadha in its immediate neighbourhood was the place chosen for sowing the new-fangled doctrines of Buddha, Bengal finds no mention in the early Buddhist literature. Mr. B. C. Majumdar who discusses the situation in his *History of the Bengali Language* is of opinion that *Banga* was not colonised by the Aryans till the 6th century B.C. Relying on tradition and a very fragmentary application of linguistic palaeontology, it has been held as an established fact that long before the Buddhist faith worked out its way, Vijay Sinha of Bengal sailed over to Ceylon and colonised it in the Aryan fashion (B. C. Majumdar's *History of the Bengali Language*, page 23).\* Mr. Majumdar also mentions Bengal as sending out a powerful colony to far-off Annam not later than the 7th century B.C.—the leader “*Luck-lom*” having been described as coming over from a country known as “*Bong-long*.” Thus a case is made out for Bengal as a country-name as early as the 7th century B.C. at least, and independent of any Aryan influence or rule.

\* Dr. S. K. Chatterji in his *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol. I, pp. 72-73, rejects the theory of Ceylon being colonised or conquered by Vijaya, and links Bengal to Gujrat, but he admits that after Asoka, the two countries, Bengal and Ceylon, became “very intimate” through trade.

(ii) But this early origin cannot be claimed for Bengali language and literature. Mr. Sushil Kumar Chakravarti in his *Vaishnav Sāhitya* mentions the seventh century as the period that saw the birth of Bengali literature. But unfortunately this theory has yet to be substantiated. In the very beginning of his Introduction to his most valued work on the *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Dr. S. K. Chatterji says that as an independent and characterised language, or rather, as a distinct dialect group Bengali has been in existence for nearly ten centuries. Dr. Chatterji has shown in his book (p. 82) the broad lines along which the Indo-Aryan speech became transformed into Bengali. It is only when we come to the fourteenth century that we find the provincial vernaculars, Maithili and Bengali and Oriya, differentiated,—e.g. the language of the *Krishnakīrtan* and that of the Puri inscriptions. In his book on the *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, for the sake of convenience he divides the language into three periods: in the formative or old Bengali period (c. 950-1200 A.C.) Bengali literature was just feeling its way, and we may say definitely that the *Charyās* formed a part of the new literature, which “possibly” further consisted of similar songs on Radha and Krishna, and of some hymns and ballads which last were the sources later of such poems as Gopi-chandra, Dharma-mangal, Lakhindar and Behula, Srimanta and Kalketu tales. The literary output in these years is very scanty;—a number of place-names in inscriptions and old books, beginning from the first half of the 5th century A.D., but hardly of any value (see R. D. Banerjee’s *The Palas*

of Bengal, pp. 87-90); a glossary of over 300 words prepared by a Bengali *pandit* about 1159 A.D.; most important of all, some 47 or 50 songs called *Charyā-padas* or *Charyās*. In commenting upon MM. H. P. Sastri's Buddhist Songs and Lyrics, Dr. Chatterji says that "the dialect of the Caryās alone is old Bengali." This has been disputed and the *Charyās* have been claimed to be in Oriya, though with extremely doubtful success. (*Utkal Sāhitya*, 1333 B.S.) Practically speaking, then, these only may be said to have been composed under Buddhist influence.

(iii) But what directly bears on our subject is the question of the nature of this influence, if there was any influence at all. The *dohās* or lyrics are full of allusions to the doctrines, and it is not wide of the mark to guess that such doctrines as were so alluded to were fairly popular. One of the three principal doctrines was known as Bangali—Abadhuti, Chandali and Bangali. Buddhadeva has come down to the masses to-day as Dharma Thakur and tens of thousands worship him, if not millions, in the districts of Hughli, Midnapur, Birbhum, Bankura and Manbhum. Dr. D. C. Sen describes the Nathadharma as a composite product of "Buddhism and Saivism." The *Sūnyapurān*, the *Gorakshaviṇay* and the *Maynāmatīr Gān* are books that betray if not the presence of the Buddhist at least the existence of an allied faith. Coming to Buddhism proper, MM. H. P. Sastri has demonstrated that it did not die with the advent of the Muhammadans into this country; he mentions how even in a manuscript penned in 1289 A.D. named *Pancharakshā* there have been found five separate treatises on Buddhism; how there is in

Cambridge a palm-leaf manuscript in Bengali dated 1446 on *Kāla-chakra-tantra* ; how even so late as 1431 in a commentary on *Amarakosha* there are references to Buddhism (*The Nārāyan*, Paus, 1322 B.S.). Quietly, perhaps, but surely Buddhism has preserved and maintained its life in Bengal, and the Dharmarajik Chaitya Vihar in the College Square is no innovation of the twentieth century. The Faith itself has attracted many scholars of repute for its study ; Krishna Chandra Majumdar, the poet of the *Sadbhāva-Shatak*, was almost a convert to it in the latter part of his career ;\* with Satyendra Nath Tagore it was a life's passion altogether, and many excellent articles penned by MM. Haraprasad Sastri re-create the atmosphere necessary for such a study.

The Buddhist influence in the sense of a source for stories and legends is not yet dead ; if we ransack the historical ballads of Rabindra Nath we shall find many of them to have been drawn from the *Abadān Shatak* or similar works ; even the *Natir Pūjā*, the staging of which created quite a stir, comes from the same quarter. But there is no reason to suppose that the Buddhist literature either in Pali or Sanskrit moulded the forms or the spirit of the literature in its early state. As regards the *dohā* or *pada* form, it may be said that there is nothing unusual in it, the lyric or the song is too often the earliest form in any literature.

\* " The poet was then devoted to the study of Buddhist philosophy and theology, and seemed to have taken the Buddha as his ideal in life."—Life of Krishna Chandra Majumdar, the Poet, in Bengali, by Prof. Indu Prakash Banerji, p. 124.

This disposes of the Buddhist influence. We shall now try to measure the extent of the Vaishnav and the Muhammadan influence, which were all the influences that preceded the western, and regarding which there should be no complaint about scantiness of material. The Buddhist stamp sadly requires scrutiny and examination as well as search for new materials to facilitate investigation ; so long as this is not done, the early history of Bengali literature will continue as hazy as ever.

Unanimity exists among the scholars who have studied the influence of Vaishnavism on Bengali literature. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Vaishnav influence was of much wider appeal and had a much more direct bearing on the literature than the Buddhist. The most glorious chapter in the history of the vernacular literature is that in which the Vaishnav *padas* are dealt with and critics have waxed eloquent over it. The sense of indebtedness is so very keen that a prominent writer on the subject states as follows :—“ Bengali literature could not have come to its present development without favour (of co-operation) from Vaishnavs.”\* The Vaishnav method of “ dealing allegorically with the relation of the soul to God under the form of love which Radha bore to Krishna ” has come in for considerable appreciation in Grierson’s *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan*. It was also on account of the matchless *padas* of Vaishnav poets that Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen, with whom they are a passion, has said in his *Bangabhāshā O Sāhitya*

\* Pandit A. C. Vidyabhushan’s preface to the *Vaishnav Sāhitya* by Sushil Kumar Chakravarti.

(Fifth Edition, p. 190),—"The Bengali poet is unrivalled in descriptions of love." R. C. Dutta in his *Literature of Bengal* apostrophised the souls of these poets and exclaimed: "Sweet Vidyapati! Sweet Chandidas! The earliest stars in the firmament of Bengali literature! Long, 'long will your strains be remembered and sung in Bengal!" At first he was heard with polite distrust, but truth asserts now that he did not err on the side of over-praise.

Vaishnavism acted on the literature of Bengal in two broad ways. In the first place, it opened the flood-gates of emotion and swelled the tide of pathos full. But we shall fail to seize the significance of this emotionalism if we forget that it had an ennobling effect both on the writers and on the hearers; it will not be possible for us to grasp the spirit of the Vaishnav poets if we forget that they lived a life the essential sentiment of which they translated into literature. No wonder if these poets obtain their meed of praise from the consensus of critical opinion; for if sincerity is a test of the highest, they have it in abundance. The sweet, honeyed (even cloying sometimes) words and phrases of Jaydev, Vidyapati and Chandidas find a commentary in the austere life which Sri Chaitanya lived, tuned to a very high pitch of divine love, and every *pada* is then made instinct with a sense of intense life which might not have been there at first.

In the second place, these poets linked Bengali to Sanskrit in a closer tie; *Bhāgavat* is the favourite book of the Vaishnavs; there the sportive pranks of Sri Krishna are described in profuse detail—the pranks which all true devotees delight so much to hear. The philosophical background of their faith

could be fully understood only on the study of philosophical systems composed and elaborated in the Sanskrit language; some of the scholars write famous commentaries on these. The verse compositions, as has been said already, were written closely with an eye to the Sanskrit rules on *Ālankāra*.

These, then, were the influences of Vaishnavism; it has been so well set forth by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen in his valued treatises on the *Vaishnav Literature of Bengal* that any improvement on it is impossible. Let us but briefly notice here that it is still a potent factor in moulding poets and shaping their lines of composition. It has stirred Rabindra Nath profoundly both in form and spirit, and he has broadly represented in twentieth century fashion the hunger of the individual for the One that is All—that “sexless, ageless, deathless He” pervading the Universe. *Bhānu Sinher Padāvali* in his early poetical career, and the *Gītānjali* to-day which may serve to express his later growth, reveal the stamp both of the form and the spirit of Vaishnav *padas*. Nobody would dare to say that this was the only influence on him, nor would anybody say that the poet failed to receive this influence in a manner entirely his own. The late Mr. C. R. Das, however, as a poet, breathed more intensely and exclusively in the atmosphere of this influence. These two poets in modern Bengal amply demonstrate the strength of Vaishnavism as a literary motive power even now.

✓ Muhammadan influence had much greater scope probably because it was more alien in its character and brought about changes not only in the language, literary form, thoughts and ideas, religious faith, but also in dress and many items of daily routine,

such as cooking. Even in the domain of literature 'Muhammadanism' presented three models in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. We are no doubt concerned here only with the literary changes, but it is proper to realise that the influence practically exerted was stronger in its character and covered a larger ground.

Regarding literary development, the effect of the Muhammadan rule has been variously estimated and criticised. Some have held that it was altogether for the worse, that it was a check on the literary growth. The officers of the revenue court of the Mughal regime would not, as a rule, even receive a petition written in Bengali—it had to be written in Persian, which was the avenue to all places of trust and emolument. In fact, the Persian language held its ground in that respect till 1837 when it was replaced by English in all the courts of the Lower Provinces. It might be contended here that a court language does not exert a very great influence on the country; at any rate it has not done so in Bengal. Even now, few literary men would be able to understand or appreciate the highly mixed and technical language of the present-day law-courts. There is, on the other hand, a considerable body of critical opinion which asserts that it was the Muhammadan patronage which raised Bengali to a literary status. Moslem chiefs appointed scholars to translate the Sanskrit works (which were so much liked by their subjects) into Bengali that they now spoke and understood. Nassira Shah and Sultan Giasuddin are gratefully remembered by the poet Vidyapati in his lyrics. Paragal Khan, who was Husain Shah's general, and Chhuti Khan, son of



Paragal Khan, were also noted patrons of literature. So was Magan Thakur, a Moslem minister at the court of Aracan, at whose instance the Moslem poet Alwal of Chittagong composed the *Padmābat*, translating Malik Muhammad's Hindi version of the story of Padmavati, queen of Chitor. It is held further that Hindu Rajas followed suit and generally the Brahmanical intellect was attracted towards vernacular studies.

But it is evident that some at least of the Muhammadan rulers were oppressive in their treatment, and their cruel and bitter persecutions rendered many Hindus homeless. Bijay Gupta in his *Padmapurān* and Jayananda in his *Chaitanyamangal* record evidences of such, and mention how Brahmins, particularly of Nabadwip, were maltreated by evil-minded Moslem rulers. And so far as royal patronage goes, it is at least as old as Vikramaditya, to proceed no further. One of the many reasons which induced Brahmin scholars to look at Bengali with a kindly eye, with sympathy if not reverence, and to try their hands at composition in the vernacular, might be the popularity and strength of the Vaishnav faith which claimed devoted converts even in the dense ranks of Brahmin orthodoxy.

The truth seems to be that there had been many Moslem chiefs who, fortunately for the growth of the vernacular literature, were genuine lovers of learning and poetry, and were no fanatics; it was to their credit that they did not despise it simply because it was written in the vernacular or because it narrated the doings of gods and goddesses in whom, as devout Muhammadans, they could have no faith. As regards the patronage question, the general atmosphere must

have been favourable, otherwise it would have very little practical effect. Hindus and Muhammadans combined in cultivating Bengali literature—many Muhammadan scribes copied the manuscript of the *Manasāmangal*,—in worshipping the Muses people merged all their differences of faith.\* Muhammadan rule was certainly not obstructionist, but the possible influence (or is it merely a similarity) of Sufism apart, it does not seem to have brought about any remarkable revolution in the literary ideas and thoughts of the country.

It has been alleged that characters like Hira in the *Vidyāsundar* and Sonamukhi in the *Kāminī-kumār* are not genuine pictures of Hindu society and it has been further suggested that they have been imported from Persian literature and books modelled on it like *Jeলেখা* and *Layalāmajnu*.† But the *kutni* or go-between was a village character. In the *Mymensingh Ballads* which should give us pause and induce us to re-consider all theories with regard to this new and valued find, there are vivid pictures of this village go-between. In the ballad named *Malua* the Quazi who was of a licentious character had recourse to the assistance of one Netai Kutni, old in age but engaged in wheedling wives out of their loyalty to their husband. This secured to her a substantial earning.

“ Her hair has grown gray, she has lost her teeth.  
Her bread she earns by service of this kind.‡

\* Dr. D. C. Sen—*Saral Bāngālā Sāhitya*, p. 18.

† Dr. D. C. Sen—*Bangabhāshā O Sāhitya*, 3rd Edition, p. 565.

‡ Dr. D. C. Sen—*Maimansingha Gitikā*, p. 68.

চুল পাকিয়াছে তার পড়িয়াছে দাত ।  
এতক করিয়া এখন জুটার পেটের ভাত ॥

Again, in the same book (pp. 115-16), in the ballad named after its heroine Kamala, there is a description of Chikan Gaylani, who was much in request among the loose characters of the locality and whom the Karkun employed to tempt Kamala, a task in which the impertinent milkmaid was rather roughly handled. Netai and Chikan were Hindu characters, and the retort that the *Mymensingh Ballads* tells us of the two communities living side by side is met with the counter-retort that at any rate such characters were not drawn from books, as suggested in the allegation referred to above, but depicted directly from real life, such as the simple village poet found it round him.

Coming to the nineteenth century, we find that so late as the middle of it, the Persian poets were very popular and fired many poetic souls with emotional fervour and poetic enthusiasm, and sometimes the result found its way to literary efforts. The poet, Krishna Chandra Majumdar (1838-1907), was very well proficient in Persian; he was widely read, not only in Firdausi and Hafiz \* but also in Sadi, Omar Khayyam, Jami, Jalaluddin Rumi (see Chap. VII, *Kavi Krishnachandra Majumdārer Jīvancharit*, by Induprakash Bandyopadhyay). Many parallel passages have been quoted by the biographer from the poems of Krishna Chandra and the Persian poets whom Mr. Bandyopadhyay read in their English versions. Those who read the *Sadbhāva-Shatak* (1860) for the first time loved Persian poets with all their soul, wept as they read or

\* Sen—Hāfez, the *Prabasi*, 1339 B.S.

heard the melodious verses and were drunk with the wine of their poetry.

The Persian poet Hafiz had a remarkable influence on the Brahmo thinkers—Ram Mohan and Maharshi Debendra Nath. Ram Mohan was in the habit of reciting his verses every day along with the *slokas* from the *Upanishads* just before his bath, in which position the Maharshi saw him in his boyhood. With the Maharshi, Hafiz was a passion; when communing within himself in the solitude of the Himalayas he was fond of the enchanting lines; the Persian poet taught him to enjoy raptures at the sight of the moon; and this love for Hafiz endured to the very end and claimed from him equal homage with the *Upanishads*. It is said that once in Lahore, Debendra Nath was enjoying a moon-lit evening along with friends and companions in the wide open; he was missing after a little while and his friends sought him out and found him dancing, all forgetful of himself, round an unknown man who was reciting in a sweet voice verses from Hafiz. This partiality for the Persian poet Keshab Chandra derived from the Maharshi. Keshab found in his scheme of the New Dispensation, room for Muhammad the Prophet and persuaded Babu Girish Chandra Sen to devote himself to Persian and Arabic to translate the scriptures into Bengali.

We have considered in this chapter the general characteristics of Bengali Literature prior to the operation of western influence, and have also discussed the nature and extent of the Buddhist, Vaishnav and Muhammadan influences on the form

and spirit of the literature of the country. This will have given us some definite idea of its condition when western influence began to act.

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## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background

#### *I. Contact with the West : before the Christian Era*

In this chapter we shall try to investigate the scope and extent of the west which has brought about so many changes in Bengal, or for that matter throughout the length and breadth of India, in all the departments of life. It may be considered as irrelevant at first view to the subject before us—Western influence in Bengali literature—but it is not really so, because Europe is a wide area, and the regional, national and racial characteristics are quite distinct and clear. There is something which differentiates the Teutonic from the Celtic or from the Latin or the Slavonic race, though it may be that “through the ages one increasing purpose runs”—the divine purpose of welding the different nations, different in so many respects, into one whole mass of humanity, and not a mere “League,” which will be permeated by noble ideas irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Had we been placed under French or German domination or Russian rule, thrown into close and intimate contact with any other European nation than English, the result would in all probability have been something quite different. Hence it is important to know and bear in mind that England, more than any other country, influenced us, and

that when we speak of western influence what we generally mean is English influence. We shall not, for the present at least, enter into any conjectural theories about what exactly would have happened if the genius of some other literature had tried to mould Bengali, but proceed straight to enquire what was the nature, scope and extent of that portion of the west with which we had been thrown in close contact, and how this contact had been brought about.

Even before the invasion by Alexander in 327 B.C. there was some sort of communication between India and Greece, by means of trade through the agency of the Persians who acted as middle men. But this was strictly confined to trade, and never extended to any attempt at political or cultural conquest; the Greeks looked with indifference, if not contempt, upon the "barbarians," though Athens, the capital of Greece, was the "eye of Europe;" and on this ground Mr. H. G. Rawlinson in his book *Intercourse between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the fall of Rome* dismisses the idea that there was any borrowing between the Orphic and Pythagorean philosophy and the Indian doctrines. He lays special emphasis on the point that "there is not a single reference in Greek literature before 328 B.C. which gives us the slightest reason for supposing that the Greeks knew of the existence of Indian philosophy," and holds that the Indians were equally untouched by the Greek literature or philosophy, the views of Dr. Burnet and Dr. Schroeder notwithstanding, on account of the geographical positions of both, the oceans and

mountains and desert that had to be crossed acted as effective barriers. Increased facilities of locomotion as wonderful as miracles and made possible by means of the advances of the natural sciences have, in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, brought the different parts of the world more closely together and helped the cultural unity of the human race.

Alexander's invasion and military conquest of a part of India—for he hardly advanced beyond the Punjab—opened the way for a more frequent intercourse between the two countries and the two nations were not slow to exchange ideas. On this specialists have built their favourite theories and speculation has been freely indulged in. It has been held that there have been mutual influences and counter-influences, actions and reactions, and the stamp of these is traceable in the coinage, art, architecture, philosophy, literature, etc., of the two. But most of these theories remain in the domain of controversy and have not yet found acceptance in the world of letters, and even those which have been tested and obtained the approbation of the majority have limited significance.

In literature, specially, though much capital has been made of the possibility of Greek influence in Indian Drama by so eminent an Orientalist as Weber, yet very little has been up till now substantiated, and the generic distinction of the two types is becoming more and more evident. The case for influence stands upon the derivation of a few words of doubtful etymology. As regards literary reaction, influence of the east on the west, we may mention the steady migration of fables of eastern,



rather, Indian origin towards the west—from India to Persia, thence to Arabia, thence to Greece and Rome—that was the way they travelled. The fables of Bidpai or Pilpay are a stock example (see H. G. Rawlinson's book, Chapter VIII). The political conquest was followed by cultural, though both of these were extremely limited in scope and area, in tremendous contrast to the present political and cultural conquest of India by the west. In spite of this contrast it is worth remembering that western influence, however slight in the beginning in intensity and in effect, dates from centuries before the Christian era, and India was not so stolidly impervious to outside influences as she is generally represented to have been—though to trace a continuity of such influences is hopelessly impossible.

## *II. Fight for Political Supremacy among Rival European Nations.*

Unhappily we are not yet in a position to trace the continuity of the communication between the east and the west, thus begun in years that preceded the Christian era; but there was a halo about India that had to be reckoned with. The fabulous "wealth of Ind" had long attracted traders and queer customers from the maritime countries of Europe; poets sang of it, youth mused on it, and romantic ideas of dreamy imagination floated over it in an airy fashion. Nor were people found wanting who willingly embarked on daring voyages of adventure across unknown seas with a view to seek out its enchanting coasts. The governments of the different countries gave all the support

and sanction that was needed to the enterprising sailors whose individual success would be glorified into acts of patriotism. This quest for India was one of the pregnant chapters in the history of the Renaissance—of the 16th century Europe, pregnant because it was full of a very deep significance for the times to come. The discovery of the New World by Columbus was but an accidental result of this general search for a convenient route to India, presumably for the greater facility of trade.

India is now under British control, but it is to be understood that the English have obtained this upper hand in Indian affairs only after a series of vicissitudes; it was by the force of circumstances as well as by something in the sturdy character of the nation that they obtained the position they now hold, as active and busy interpreters of the west to the east. The glory of first establishing a connection with India belongs, among modern European nations, to the Portuguese. On July 8, 1497, Vasco da Gama sailed from Lisbon, rounded the Cape and reached Calicut on May 20, 1498. The exact date and month are still in dispute. The Raja or Zamorin of Calicut received him very hospitably and an exchange of “gold, silver, copper and vermilion” for “spices, pepper, and precious stones” was invited. But as early as 1502 the Portuguese showed the armed gauntlet and the palace of the Zamorin was bombarded; and the knowledge and use of the firearms and artillery as well as order, discipline and valour proclaimed the westerners superior to the soldiers of the east; it was demonstrated again and again how even a handful of the former could hold their own, nay, even strike terror

into the crowded ranks of the latter, engaged as the minor and petty chiefs on the sea-coasts of India were in active and hostile dissensions, not only among themselves but also fighting for independence against the Muhammadans, who threatened to conquer the whole of South India as they had already virtually made themselves masters of the North.

When Albuquerque, the founder of Portuguese India and the most worthy of all Portuguese governors (sometimes called the "Portuguese Mars" and sometimes the "Clive of Portuguese India") conquered Goa, even now the capital of the Portuguese possessions in India, and was assisted in his Indian conquests by distinguished admirals like Tristram da Cunha and the famous Magellan (rather Magalhães), the future seemed to be prolific of bright results for Portugal. From the Cape of Good Hope close to the gates of China, the Portuguese had set up factories which assured to them the control of commerce of Europe and India and they were expected to follow up this advantage. The twenty years that intervened between the voyage of Vasco da Gama and the death of Albuquerque formed a brilliant period of achievement of which the most powerful crown in all Europe might well feel proud. But the attention of the Portuguese was diverted, partly at least, to the invasion and possible capture and conquest of rich islands of spices in the Far East. In Bengal they secured a footing as early as 1537 when Lopez Vas de Sampayo sailed into the Ganges with nine vessels, and their name was a source of constant terror to the peaceful villagers or seamen plying their trade in a serene atmosphere from which all violence, they (the villagers) had

thought in all innocence and ignorance of hard facts, was excluded. On the Malabar and Coromandel coasts the Portuguese fixed their attention and concentrated their prowess.

Why then, with all the advantages of pioneers before them, did the Portuguese fail to succeed on the soil of India? In one sense they did incalculable good to India or for that matter to the world at large by opening up a line of communication independent of the Muhammadans, but in the process, the Portuguese power killed itself, its strength was gone from it, and it paid for its intrusion into the alien and mysterious civilization of the east by suffering degradation. The Portuguese came to India towards the very close of the fifteenth century; a historian writes to say that in spite of the assertions of the Portuguese to the contrary the Muhammadan traders "never attempted to secure political independence save where such independence was essential to the conservation of their own community." The Hindus and the Muhammadans, engaged in a death struggle over the great Kingdom of Vijaynagar, looked on the Portuguese new-comers as pirates, not to be taken too seriously. Too late, alas, came the combinations of the Muhammadans in 1570-78 which failed, and the increasing pressure of the English\* and the Dutch from the sea, and of the Emperors of Delhi from the north, made the situation still more helplessly involved. With such odds against them, it was no wonder that the Indian

\* For an account of the fight off Surat, 1612, as a result of which the people were impressed with the strength and courage of the English as against the Portuguese, see *Early English Adventurers in the East* (Wright; Andrew Melrose), pp. 120-122.

chiefs who lorded it over petty kingdoms on the coast acknowledged defeat at the hands of the Portuguese. But why, to repeat, did the Portuguese fail?

The Portuguese rule was more superficial and weak than may be imagined at first; they were never opposed to any of the fighting or martial races of India; their rule did not extend into the interior; that their spirit was equal to the conquest, not merely of India, but also the rest of the world, nobody denies; but their scale of actions was exceedingly small; their weak control was further weakened by certain inherent moral and political disadvantages under which the nation laboured. The name "Portuguese conquest" is too ambitious for the power they really exercised; their possessions were scattered, few and far between; their cruelty was a repellent factor; on this topic we should remember however that Louis Enault in the book *L'Inde Pittoresque* tersely says: "There is some blood on the glory of the Portuguese. But in these two centuries—the 15th and the 16th—which were so terrible, and which heralded the birth of a new world in Europe as well as in Asia, is there not some blood everywhere?" (Pp. 245-46.) As Mr. R. S. Whiteway, late of the Bengal Civil Service, pertinently remarks: "The history of its" (Portuguese) "connection with India is thus a series of episodes, interesting as revelations of character and social life, but showing few possibilities of organic growth" (*The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*, page 13). Hence the powerful personalities of Albuquerque, Alfonso Mexia, Simao Botelho availed nothing. So far as the province of Bengal was concerned, the Portuguese had to suffer peculiar

difficulties and they had to take up inferior positions. Most of the attempts of the Portuguese to gain a footing in Bengal proved abortive, like that in 1528 by one Martin Alfonso de Mello Jusente, described in detail in Mr. Whiteway's book, and though at last they gained it, it was very precarious, and by no means secure. Such difficulties were but to be expected in a land-locked country in Bengal, not depending on sea-borne trade for its necessities. In 1580, Spain and Portugal united under the Spanish crown and from 1580 to 1640, Portugal was dependent on Spain, and the Eastern possessions of the former languished under the neglect of the latter country. To crown all, the Portuguese were gradually dispossessed of their power in the east through the Dutch who snatched away Ceylon and Malacca from them by 1640 and ousted them also from Bengal and the Coromandel and Malabar coasts, and the English gave the final stroke because it was a question of struggle for existence that made them so pronouncedly hostile to the Portuguese interests in Bengal and elsewhere. At Cambay, at Swalli, the port of Surat, and off the coast of Malabar, important battles were fought between the English and the Portuguese, and the English used, and used successfully, their artillery and ships to help the Islands of Kishin and Hormuz against the Portuguese attack, for they wanted to break through the intrigues and the military and political leagues formed by the Portuguese in conjunction with the native chiefs and princes of India.\*

\* "They were as prompt to resent as to offer offences, and were always ready to stake their existence on the issue of every quarrel.

The Dutch were, however, a little differently placed. The Dutch East India Company established itself at Surat by 1616. In Holland the whole energies of the nation were utilised in the formation of chartered companies for the expansion of trade and of the empire. In France it was left to the initiative of individuals or statesmen, and there was nothing like a national response. (See H. E. Egerton's *Origin and Growth of the British Dominions*.) It has also to be taken into consideration that the Dutch had very little zeal for conversion, they loved deeds and facts far more than ideas and were fond, above all, of making a profit; they did not meet with hostility from either the Hindus or the Muhammadans, because they did not attempt at "making an impression" on the natives of the country by barbarous atrocities. This explains how the Dutch came to have an extensive control also of the Eastern Archipelago, a control which they have not yet lost; but they had to concentrate their attention on these islands, both against the children of the soil and against the English who helped the islanders to offer resistance to the invading Dutch, though of the two European

This waste of courage led them into many repulses and ~~defeats~~; yet they were never disheartened by reverses, and were prepared on the arrival of the first reinforcement to resume the attack in which they had failed, or enter on a new one as disproportioned to their strength. Their vices were at least equal to their virtues, and arose from the excess of the same qualities. They were as careless of the rights of others as fearless of their power; they never sought and never showed mercy; their confidence degenerated into arrogance, their religion into bigotry and persecution; and their self-esteem swelled to a pitch of pompousness and ostentation, which threw a degree of ridicule over their greatest actions."—Elphinstone, *History of British India* (1877), pp. 24-25.

nations, it was the Dutch that came on the scene earlier. If we look up the records of the East India Companies we find that from the north of Africa to the Eastern Archipelago there had been constant bickerings and parliamentary references, complaints and counter-complaints on English interference with Dutch attempts and enterprises. The native population were, it was alleged, helped by the English when maltreated by the Dutch. Bantam often came up for such complaints. The Dutch had very little resources left to bring upon their Indian settlements, busy as they were with their rich possessions on the highways of the Indian Ocean, and they had to act on the defensive in strenuous fight against rival nations in Europe. The English were now leagued with them, now opposed to them in regard to maritime trade.\* This consumed all their energies.

They had, however, opened an establishment at Chinsura as early as 1675, subordinate to Batavia. It was difficult to control the trade of Bengal and the happenings at Chinsura from the distant headquarters; so from Batavia a strong expedition was fitted out on the plea of strengthening Dutch settlements on the Coromandel Coast. It sailed in June, 1759, touched at Negapatam, but did not land any troops. It then sailed on to Bengal and reached there in October. But the British and the Nawab watched it with distrust and suspicion and attacked it, though there was then no war in Europe, close to Chinsura, the very day

\* J. F. Bense, *Anglo-Dutch Relations*.



after it had landed. The Dutch force consisted of 700 Europeans and 700 Malayas, according to Elphinstone (1,100 in all, according to Major B. D. Basu in his *Rise of the Christian Power in India*), while the British had 320 Europeans and 1,200 sepoy, and were helped by a large body of the Nawab's cavalry. Mercenaries abounded in those days and Germans were enlisted on both sides. The British won the day, the Dutch suffered heavily, and since that fight Dutch trade declined in India, so much so that in the year 1805, the settlement at Chinsura was given up to the East India Company in exchange for Sumatra.

The French in Europe, last among the great European maritime powers to enter the lists for a struggle for supremacy in India by opening up avenues for trade and commerce, were powerful rivals to the foreign nations who had already secured a footing in the soil. They also had been fired with a zeal for exploring the pathways to the east; and their attempts in this direction date from 1503 (Colonel G. B. Mangleson's *History of the French in India*, page 5). In 1604, the first French East India Company was formed. But the first noteworthy success was that of Francis Martin who founded Pondicherry in 1674, according to A. Wyatt Talby, and saved it from Sivaji by efficient negotiations. The town was well laid out by 1726-30 when French commerce made considerable progress. The Dutch had stormed and secured Pondicherry in 1693, but the treaty of Ryswick (1697) restored the settlement to French control. This is a typical example of the various turns in the warfare between the European nations: the

fortunes of actual fighting were freely modified by the policies of statesmanship arrived at after profound deliberations in the far-off centres of Europe. Any way, the French trade did not show any promise. The achievements of Dupleix, La Bourdonnais, Bussy and Lally were destined to inevitable and ignominious failures; unsupported both in India and at home, they suffered defeat, humiliation and disappointment, and the ambition for establishing a kingdom in the East was shattered beyond repair. Want of a resolute policy, incapacity of the subordinate agents of the French masters, were obstacles which proved insurmountable.

The case of Chandernagore is a typical one; the place was first occupied by the French in 1676, fortified in 1688, and it had commercial branches opened at various towns in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, but all these availed nothing; starved in finance, Chandernagore itself put on a forlorn appearance. Dupleix by his master strokes completely changed the look of the town, which under his control and management occupied the first place among European establishments in Bengal. Its site was better chosen; and the French enjoyed, if anything, more favour from the Muhammadan ruler. But their growing importance in inter-state negotiations in South India led many to view them with distrust and the reason why Siraj-ud-daula did not care to oust them from Chandernagore was that he felt confident in his own power after his first and easy capture of Calcutta.\* When Clive

\* "He could govern them, he said, with a pair of slippers."—Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive*, p. 119.

and Śiraj-ud-daula seemed to come to bitter conflict, the French failed to profit by the situation and to turn it to their advantage ; Clive would brook no rival European power in Bengal and “ the Nawab was brought to give an exceedingly ambiguous permission to attack the French.”\* The result was a death-blow to French power, both political and commercial, at least so far as Bengal was concerned.

The English were successful in their contest for supremacy in trade and commerce in India ; they were extremely cautious in their dealings with the Indian princes, professing neutrality at first so far as they could help it, and on their guard against the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French, all powerful rivals. Their military success in South India and in Bengal proved surprising, and the first battles were rather forced on them. No doubt they were helped by a fortunate combination of circumstances both in India and abroad, but at the same time it must be admitted that they had more pertinacity than their comrades. In analysing the causes of the failure of the French on the soil of India, Col. Malleon in his book *History of the French in India* (Chapter XII) pays tribute to England for the “ pertinacious character of her people ” (p. 583). There was no feebleness, no incapacity, no lack of resolution among the English officers of the East India Company—and what the vision of Dupleix contemplated, what his ambition schemed for, was lost to France by her own want of resourcefulness, of decision, of tenacity. The

\* *Ibid*, p. 129.

fire of Dupleix showed the way to Clive,—and then went out.

Other nations, the Danes and the Germans, tried their hand at obtaining a foothold in India, the Belgian attempt was of the slightest kind. The Danes won easy hospitality wherever they went; on the Malabar coast they had their factories: the beautiful town of Serampore on the Hooghly was to their credit, and on the question of western influence, we should remember that British missionaries found a refuge in Serampore itself when they could not get a convenient place in Calcutta with its strict and sometimes arbitrary press laws. The Germans got up a company of their own, sailed to India in 1717, and in spite of Dutch and English opposition, got a charter from the Mughal Emperor and was granted a village, Bankibazar, 15 miles from Calcutta, by the Governor of Bengal, Murshed Kuli Khan, for erection of a suitable factory. The German venture, Ostend Company, soon grew successful, but it had been trading under the protection of Austria and European politics compelled the Austrian Emperor to give up this commercial enterprise in the east. The Dutch and the English intrigued successfully with the Foujdar of Hughli and persuaded him, under false pretences, to attack the German settlement which had to be evacuated for the time being. The final blow was struck in 1748 when Ali Verdi Khan drove out the Germans.\*

\* G. L. De's *Indo-European Settlements in 18th Century*, and other papers in the *Advance*, May, 1932.

### *III. Western influence thus resolves itself into English influence.*

Once the English found themselves masters of the land, they spared no pains to make their supremacy real, extensive and thorough. We find English domination more powerful on the whole and covering a longer period and a wider area than any other power in India and thus we find the English influencing India more than any other European nation. What applies to India applies equally well, if not with greater force, to the province of Bengal. In 1765 Lord Clive on behalf of the East India Company became acknowledged as the receiver of the revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and practically controlled these provinces. Before dealing with the question as to the channels through which the western influence filtered down to the thoughts and forms of expression of Bengali literature, it is proper to note, then, that when we speak of the western influence we practically mean English by the term western, English being the main medium.) The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French had no time to occupy, far less to hold the mind of the people. Even then a small book on Bengali Grammar, presumably the first of its kind, was composed as early as 1742 by the Portuguese missionary Manoel da Assunção, along with a fair vocabulary of words in practical use among the inhabitants of the country.\* Dr. S. K. Chatterji in his book on the Bengali Language

\* The book has been reprinted by the Calcutta University, and edited with Bengali translation by Chatterji and Sen.

shows that from 100 to 110 words have been incorporated from Portuguese into Bengali, while the Dutch words are fewer, not exceeding a dozen—he mentions about ten Dutch words distinctly borrowed. Though the Germans and the Danes had also visited Bengal, there is no such reflection or trace left of their influence on the vocabulary (see Dr. S. K. Chatterji's *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Calcutta University, 1926). This influence on the vocabulary is a fair index of the influence on literature. The language of the conquering race of Anglo-Saxons has thus acted as the medium through which ideas belonging to the Continent passed on to Bengal, or India, for that matter. In the 19th century this was almost always the case, there were very few who could claim acquaintance with a modern European language other than English. Though this has changed a little, the change is not yet of any practical importance. Thus we find western influence coming to Bengal mainly through the medium of English and spreading by means of education, popular newspapers, busy law courts, even through environment, these being some of the channels of communication.

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## CHAPTER III

### Channels of the New Influence

The greatest change in Bengali literature due to any external influence was to have come from its contact with the literary forms and ideas of the west, the west with which the east is said to be so much at variance; even in these days of progress and enlightenment, days of applied science which seeks to annihilate all difference between man and man by facilitating communication and by promoting mutual intercourse among men, the difference between the two is vital. But that does not prevent the interaction of influences. In the west itself, we find that geographical barriers notwithstanding, England, France and Germany—to take only countries with a first class literature—have ever borrowed ideas from each other freely and the philosophical, literary and political ideas of these countries commingle in their cultural history. Far from being viewed with suspicion and distrust, such exchange of ideas and reciprocity of thoughts is held to be generally productive of good results. When a literature seeks to acquire fresh strength, this access of new vigour must come to it through contact with some other literature, preferably younger. Such a process is now being carried on in Bengal, and the difference is so vast as to be easily discernible. Even a casual or cursory view of the literature would convince a reader of the great change between a *paṇḍa* by the Vaishnav poets and a lyric song of devotion

by Rabindra Nath, in spite of the fact that there is a similarity of sentiment. If the change is so vast, if the jump is so big from pre-British Bengali to post-British Bengali, it behoves us to enquire how the change was brought about, in other words, how western ideas were conveyed to Bengali, to explore the diverse channels along which western ideas were imported into the country. For this purpose, first of all, the College of Fort William established just in the beginning of the nineteenth century claims our attention.

### *1. The College of Fort William.*

The starting of the College of Fort William was an event which, though not very early in point of time and so important from the chronological point of view, was fraught with far-reaching consequences, because it was prolific of results which greatly helped to guide the Bengali language and literature in a new channel. The College was established on the 4th May, 1800, for reasons mentioned in the Minute in the Governor-General's Council, dated the 18th August, 1800—for the study and training of civilians from 'Home' in the language and literature of the country where they were to work. With regard to the nature of this training which was to be given to the servants of the Company, the Minute clearly stated that "this education must be founded in a general knowledge of the branches of literature and science which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe. To this foundation should be added an intimate acquaintance with the history,



language, customs and manners of the people of India." Even the study of the vernacular dialects in use within the dominions of each presidency was not lost sight of. The fulfilment of the objects mentioned here required a special institution and hence the establishment of the College of Fort William. It was not the product of any sudden impulse, but the result of a deliberate and definite policy. Ignorance of the Indian languages and ancient laws created an almost unavoidable dependence on subordinate Indians whom the English officers were not disposed to trust fully. For some time before this, the Governor-General had recognised the importance, to the civil servants of the Company, of an adequate knowledge of the native language, as can be clearly seen from the Government Public Department Notification, dated the 21st December, 1798, which was published on the 3rd January, 1799, and stated—"From and after the 1st January, 1801, no servant will be deemed eligible to any of the offices hereinafter mentioned, unless he shall have passed an examination (the nature of which will be hereafter determined), in the laws and regulations of the languages, a knowledge of which is hereby declared to be an indispensable qualification." Among other subjects, a knowledge of the Bengali language was considered requisite for the office of the Collector of Revenue or of Customs or Commercial Resident or Salt Agent in the province of Bengal or Orissa, while a knowledge of Persian and Hindustani was deemed compulsory for situation in a Court of Justice. In paragraph XV of the Minute, dated the 18th August, 1800, we find it proposed to establish professorships as soon as practi-

cable, and to inaugurate regular courses of study in the following departments :—

Arabic	} Language and Literature
Persian	
Sanskrit	
Hindustani	
Bengali	
Telenga	
Mahrathi	
“ Tamula ”	
“ Canara ”	}
Hindu Law	
Muhammadan Law	
English Law	
Ethics	
Jurisprudence	
International Law	

But the course in Bengali was not opened in the beginning, when lectures were given only in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani, and Dr. Gilchrist was the dominating figure in the College. The prevailing language of the country where the institution was located and which was the seat of government could not, however, be kept in the background and Bengali soon asserted its claim. It was contended that there was no standard work in the language. But, as in this Bengali did not stand alone, attention was fixed on the compilation and publication of works to supply the deficiency. Reverend William Carey, D.D., was appointed teacher of the Bengali and Sanskrit languages in April 1801 and was made the Professor of those languages on the 1st January, 1807.

Beside Dr. Carey, the following gentlemen among others were employed in the Bengali Department in the first eighteen years of its existence :—

Ramanath Nyayavachaspati,  
 Ramjay Tarkalankar,  
 Kali Prasad Tarkasiddhanta,  
 Padma Lochan Chudamani,  
 Sib Chandra Tarkalankar,  
 Ram Kishore Tarkachudamani,  
 Ram Kumar Siromani,  
 Gadadhar Tarkavagisa,  
 Ram Chandra Roy,  
 Narottam Basu,  
 Ram Ram Basu,  
 Sripati Mukhopadhyay  
 and

Lieutenant William Price, Assistant Professor of Bengali and Sanskrit.

Prizes in money, medals and books were awarded to the successful students on the results of periodical examinations and annual disputations in the vernacular which were held to test the students' proficiency in the language. The directorate had ordered the immediate abolition of the College in 1802, but the Marquis of Wellesley, the founder of the institution, intervened and saved it from a premature death, asking the Court to revise their opinion in the light of his views stated in his letter, dated the 5th August of the same year.

A noteworthy feature of the College was its annual public disputation referred to above where students had to attack or maintain a thesis in some

oriental language in the presence of His Excellency the Governor-General and Visitor of the College of Fort William, the President and members of the College Council, its officers, professors, teachers and students, the Members of the Supreme Council, Civil and Military officers, and respectable European and Indian residents of the city. The inference is easy that the students were given practical training in speaking and writing the vernacular.

It will be interesting to note the subjects of some of these disputations which had a particular reference to Bengal :—

The 2nd March, 1807.—“ A knowledge of the Bengali language is of great importance for the transaction of public business in Bengal.”

The 30th September, 1812.—“ The Bengali is the purest of those languages which are derived from the Sanskrit.”

The 20th June, 1814.—“ The study of Sanskrit by the learned Natives of Bengal has occasioned the Bengali language to be neglected.”

The 25th July, 1815.—“ The Bengali language is not only well calculated for matters of business, but also is adapted to works of Literature and Science.”

The 15th July, 1816.—“ The Bengali language is better suited to historical, than to poetical or philosophical composition.”

The 30th June, 1817.—“ The advantage of the Oriental method of conveying instruction by means of Parables or Tales, is peculiarly conspicuous in the Bengali language.”

The 15th August, 1818.—“ The Bengali language from its facility in the compounding of words, is one of the most expressive languages of the East.”

All such disputations were carried on in Bengali. Their language abounded in Sanskritic expressions like আর এক কথা—, ইহার কারণ এই—, এই নিশ্চয়—.

As a specimen, the following sentences taken at random, from Mr. Martin's performance in 1802 will suffice :—

“আসীয়ায়েরা ইউরোপীয়েরদের মত নীতিজ্ঞ হইতে পারিবে।”

এ ছুই বাক্যের মধ্যে এক বাক্যের মিথ্যাতা এবং অত্নের অপ্রকৃততা প্রকাশ করিতে যত্ন করি। যদি এই মত ক্ষমতা তাহাদের পূর্ব কালে ছিল তবে আমরা বুঝি যে তাহারা অধিক জ্ঞানবান হইতে পারিবে। আমরাও ইহার অপেক্ষিত বটে যে তাহারা কোন কালে হবে সম্প্রতি ইউরোপীয়েরদের সমান রণ ও কর্তৃত্ব ও শিল্প কৰ্ম্ম ও ব্যবস্থতা দেওনেতে।

Or the following from Mr. Tod's dissertation in 1804 :

ইউরোপীয়েরদের মধ্যে যে পরস্পর আহার ব্যবহার ও সঙ্গ তাহা বিশেষত গ্রন্থ প্রচার ও বিচার ব্যাখ্যা দ্বারায় হয় ইহা প্রায় সকল দেশের পণ্ডিত লোকেরদের স্বীকৃত হয় ইহা সকলের স্বীকৃত জানিয়া আমি বিচার করিয়া বুঝি আমার পক্ষে যে কথা প্রমাণ দেয় ও আমার পক্ষে স্থির করে সেই অল্প কথা আমি বিবরণ করিয়া কহি।

Rev. Dr. Carey acted as Moderator in all the disputations carried on in Bengali and in that capacity would make a speech suitable to the occasion in the vernacular dialect. The official visitor, His Excellency the Governor-General, gave an address commenting on the work of the institution during the year. This is how we stumble upon the words :—  
 “ Mr. Sargent has qualified himself to translate four books of Virgil’s Aeneid into the language of Bengal and has performed the work ” (Address in 1809).

Again,—“ Mr. Monckton has undertaken, and has been able to execute, a translation into Bengalee of Shakespeare’s Tragedy of the Tempest.”

These renderings, unfortunately, are not available, or we might have further testimony of the development of the language under this experiment. But they have been referred to both in Dr. S. K. De’s book on nineteenth century Bengali literature and in Rev. Long’s Catalogue.

More important than these dissertations, however, was the publication by the College of primary books for reading and also of reference books. “ Elementary works of general utility ” were within the scope of the institution. From Roebuck’s *Annals of the College of Fort William* we find the following among the publications of the institution up to the year 1818 :—

*Kathopakathan* or Dialogues, by W. Carey, 1801.

*Hitopadesha*, by Golak Nath Sarma, 1801.

*Pratāpāditya-charitra*, by Ram Ram Basu, 1801.

*Batris-sinhāsan*, by Mrittunjay Vidyālankar, 1802.

*The Bracelet of Writing* (A collection of letters on various occasions) or *Lipimālā*, by Ram Ram Basu, 1802.

*Totā-itiḥās* (Translated from the Persian), by Chandi Charan Munsī, 1805.

*Rājā Krishnachandra-charitra*, by Rajib Lochan Mukhopadhyay, 1805.

*Rājāvalī* (A History of the Kings at Delhi), by Mrīttunjay Vidyālankar, 1808.

*A Dictionary of the Bengali Language*, in which words are traced to their origin and their various meanings given (Vol. I), by W. Carey, D.D., Serampore, The Mission Press, 1815.

*Purush-parikṣā* translated from the original Sanskrit (consists of 48 stories illustrative of the eminence of the human character in many situations of life), by Hara Prasad Ray, a Pandit attached to the College, 1815.

*A Grammar of the Bengali Language*, 4th Edition, to which are added Dialogues intended to facilitate the acquiring of the Bengali Language, by W. Carey, D.D., Serampore, the Mission Press, 1818.

In this connection it should be mentioned that on the recommendation of the College Council, Ram Kamal Sen's projected work, a Dictionary in English and Bengali (a translation of Dr. Johnson's Dic-

tionary,—Tod's Edition) received encouragement from the Government in 1816. The book, however, could not be published till the thirties. Under the direction of Dr. Carey a word-book in English and Bengali was prepared by Mohan Prasad Thakur, the "Native" Librarian attached to the College. There also appeared from the Council a Bengali verse rendering of Dayabhaga, Dattakaprakarana, called the *Dāyādhikārikrama-datta-kaumudī* by Lakshmi Narayan Sarma.

A college on the same lines as the College of Fort William and equally embracing the study of the eastern languages was felt to be necessary in England where the servants nominated by the Company might get the requisite training and discipline before coming over to India. In 1806, the Directorate had selected a staff of teachers, and a training school was started in Hertford Castle. This was transferred some three years later to Haileybury, a small manor about two miles off. In the beginning it was only a little seminary, the students were to go there when 15 years old and to stay on till posted to their respective stations. The Charter of 1813 finally determined their academical character, gave the College parliamentary recognition, provided that two years' stay at the College was compulsory, and 17 years was fixed as the minimum age for admission. Some of Haileybury's students, among whom we may name Messrs. Morris, Boulderson and Macan, distinguished themselves subsequently at the College of Fort William, due perhaps to their earlier training in England in the Oriental languages. When nomination was superseded by open competition these schools lost their importance.



The Fort William College rendered valuable service to the cause of Bengali language and literature. It gave the language its grammar and dictionary and supplied it with reading books for a preliminary study. Its students went out fully equipped with the knowledge of the vernacular dialect and helped its growth so far as lay in their power, as might be shown from the accounts of their subsequent career. In concluding this short account of the College, given with reference to Bengali literature, it will not be out of place to note that the authorities were not guided merely by motives of expediency—efficient administration of the conquered people—they were also gratified to find that the College had benefited the literature of Bengal, had imparted to it a new spirit which would bring about its rejuvenation. In proof of the above statement let me recall to memory the following words that occur in one of the speeches made in the course of the College disputations :

“ I am satisfied that the literary spirit of this country must soon have dwindled away until it became extinct, under a foreign rule, like that of our nation, had it not been for the new life instilled into scientific pursuits, through the many public testimonies afforded by the Government of its disposition to encourage and protect them to the utmost, and amongst these, the establishment of this Institution eminently holds the first place.”\*

\* For an account of the College of Fort William, see an article on the subject, pp. 92-106, *Dawn of New India* (1927), by Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji.

## *II. Education : (a) by the Government.*

### GOVERNMENT MEASURES : ONLY SPORADIC ATTEMPTS BEFORE 1813.

But the College of Fort William was a special institution with a special purpose behind it—that of giving a training, which the East India Company considered necessary, to its servants for its administrative efficiency. Whatever influence it might have on the education along western lines or the importation of western ideas was but indirect. The most direct way lay through education for which the country was ripe and eager enough by the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. People were so ready to acquire the new ideas, so responsive to the efforts wherever made for their intellectual development, for the new knowledge to be made easily accessible in the schools and colleges. The government could train its officers in the language and literature, living or dead, of the country; but that would not suffice. The people themselves wanted to have the new ideas sown broadcast. There were sporadic attempts at teaching English, schools with this object having been opened by private individuals, either for lucre or for the love of teaching or for both. In the early period of its rule the Government could not turn its attention to the education of the people, it had to be busy in the purely administrative work, and in new conquests or defensive works. It endeavoured to conserve the ancient literature of the country—and to that spirit is due the foundation of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, and of the Sanskrit College

of Benares in 1792, primarily for their utility in connection with the law courts. Even when the Company had definitely embarked on a policy, it could not follow that policy consistently and steadily, for there were distractions from time to time threatening it with ruin, and it was only after the Sepoy troubles of 1857 that the Government could pursue its object with anything like a system.

THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF 1813: AID TO ORIENTAL  
LEARNING.

In 1813, however, along with the renewal of the East India Company's Charter, the policy of the country underwent a thorough revision and in the Charter Act of 1813, there was a clause that "A sum of not less than a lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the Sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India" (Act 53 George III, Chap. 155, clause 43). Even this proviso was not applied till ten years later when in 1823, the Committee of Public Instruction was constituted, and it was only then that the money accumulated all these years was placed at its disposal for practical use. The amount was hardly sufficient for the spread of general education, and the clause was a little ambiguous about its preference for "the revival of literature" or for the "introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the Sciences." Advantage was taken of this ambiguity by the Orientalists

who primarily used the fund for the purpose of instruction in Sanskrit and Arabic and for publishing books in those languages. We must remember that to the Orientalists the classical languages of the east were a newly discovered source of profit and enjoyment and the novelty of this delight did not wear off in the least. The example of the Fort William College in considering a knowledge of Oriental learning as the sole test of merit also told upon them. The Asiatic Society founded in 1784 engrossed the attention of a great section of the European residents. Even the resolution of the Governor-General in Council made the general committee of public instruction advisory rather than executive in its function—"there should be constituted a general committee of public instruction for the purpose of ascertaining the state of public education, and of the public institutions designed for its promotion and of considering, and from time to time submitting to Government, the suggestion of such measures as it may appear expedient to adopt with a view to the better instruction of the people, to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and to the improvement of their moral character." So far we see there is no clear-cut programme before the Government.

#### RAM MOHAN RAY'S LETTER.

But the people, at least their leaders, were not to be satisfied with this. Raja Ram Mohan Ray ✓ came boldly forward and addressed a letter in December, 1823—in these days it would be called

an open letter—to Lord Amherst, expressing dissatisfaction with the Government measure of establishing a new Sanskrit School in Calcutta of a type “ which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon ” and recommending a more liberal and enlightened educational policy to the Government “ embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences,” “ employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus.”\* His appeal fell on deaf ears; the question was not to be settled so easily. Lord Amherst’s government could not move in the matter, and no decision on the point could be arrived at until the question was fought out in the Council in a triangular fight between the Anglicists, the Orientalists and the Vernacularists—those who favoured the cause of education through English, those for whom Sanskrit and Arabic were a living influence and those who would prefer the Vernacular medium.

#### A NEW DEPARTURE IN 1835.

The final step was taken in 1835, in Lord William Bentinck’s regime, after the brilliant advocacy in favour of the Anglicists made by Lord Macaulay, an advocacy with which Lord Bentinck was fully in sympathy. Macaulay pointed out that

\* It is interesting to note that Vidyasagar himself held a similar opinion and expressed it in stronger terms. See *Vidyāsāgar-prasanga*, by B. N. Banerji. But that was much later.

the lakh of rupees set apart for the printing of Sanskrit and Arabic books was neither usefully nor profitably spent, in as much as they could spend only Rs. 20,000 for the purpose per year, and there was no demand on the part of the public which was attracted rather towards English books; seven or eight thousand volumes in the English language were sold every year by the School Book Society at a profit of 20 per cent. on its outlay. The legal code was in the making—its completion would imply that for ordinary cases one would not require any knowledge of Sanskrit or Arabic. Macaulay contended further that as the Government could not reasonably encourage the missionary enterprise on behalf of the spread of the gospel, so it could not consistently with that policy spend money out of the coffers of the state for teaching “false history, false astronomy, false medicine and false religion” (Minute by the Hon’ble T. B. Macaulay, dated the 23rd February, 1835). It is remarkable that in this celebrated minute Macaulay clearly and fully admits that the adoption of English was but a transitional step and that the education of the people must be ultimately through its vernacular. In this connection we may relevantly quote from para. 29 of this liberal document :

“ We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of

science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population." The sentiment expressed here fits in with Rev. Duff's statement made in 1833. "I saw clearly and expressed myself strongly to the effect that ultimately, in a generation or two, the Bengalee, by improvement might become the fitting medium of European knowledge. But at that time it was but a poor language, like English before Chaucer, and had in it, neither by translation nor original composition, no works embodying any subjects of study beyond the merest elements" (*Life of Alexander Duff* by Dr. Smith). The decisive step was taken when in the Government Resolution, dated the 7th March, 1835, the Governor-General of India in Council directed that all available funds should be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language." Rev. Dr. Duff in his memorandum, as reproduced in the *Life of Alexander Duff*, Vol. I, pp. 200-3, would have liked to go further and was emphatically of opinion that the cause of missionary enterprise should not be neglected by the government because it served the cause of truth and that "wherever, whenever, and by whomsoever, Christianity is sacrificed at the altar of worldly expediency, there and then must the supreme good of man lie bleeding at its base." The government, however, kept strictly neutral on all points of religion because it was afraid of raising stubborn opposition on behalf of the people which might even subvert its political power.

## THE VERNACULAR EDUCATION.

Meanwhile, the case of the vernacular education had not been neglected and Mr. Adam drew up reports on the subject, documents which clearly show up the miserable condition of such institutions and which offered suggestions for their improvement—suggestions not carried out practically, though the First Annual Report of the Committee of Education attached much importance to the cause. In that report we note :—

“ We conceive the formation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed.”

And it was “ the almost fatal absence of a vernacular literature ” which made the study of English indispensable. The Committee laid down that it would encourage good books brought out in the native languages by adopting them extensively in the seminaries and that it would award pecuniary prizes to the authors of the best translations from English into the vernacular, and that it would attach a teacher of the vernacular language of the province to its educational institutions, which it sought to multiply at the rate of one seminary at each Zillah station.

## THE DESPATCH OF 1854.

But these resolutions and recommendations were not yet put into a practical shape. That had to wait till the coming of the year 1854 when Wood's Despatch, or “ The intellectual charter of



India '' as it was called, laid down definite plans of executive action for the spread of education throughout the length and breadth of the country. Hitherto the Government had simply offered suggestions and established the Committee of Education, a body, as has been already remarked, more advisory than executive. At any rate it is refreshing to hear it repeated and clearly stated for all time to come—  
 “ It is neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country.....any acquaintance with improved European knowledge which is to be communicated to the great mass of the people can only be conveyed to them through one or other of these vernacular languages.” The importance of this in consideration of the influence of the west on Bengali literature may well be considered here. But Wood’s despatch did not remain contented with laying down a general rule or educational principle, it established certain courses of action which are still governing the educational policy of the government and which have made Bengal what it is now. It saw the creation of an Educational Department and provided for an adequate system of inspection into the working of schools and colleges; as the spread of English education depended on money and as it had of necessity to depend on public enthusiasm and support, this Despatch provided for grants-in-aid to educational institutions founded by benevolent persons. Further, by this Despatch the Directors were at last persuaded that the time had come for the establishment of universities in India which might encourage a regular and liberal course of education

by conferring academical degrees and thereby admitting them into the European republic of letters and that such universities should be modelled on the London University. This recommendation of the Directorate could not be given effect to during the tenure of Lord Dalhousie but in 1857, the necessary Act—Act No. 11 of 1857—was passed by the Legislature on the 24th January for the establishment of a university at Calcutta. After that, various reform measures (including the starting of a residential university at Dacca) have been carried out which need not be detailed here. The greater attention to the Bengali language and literature is a new feature of recent times and the resolution to make Bengali the medium of instruction is only a recent event. The effect of university education in Bengal has been the tendency to level intellectual culture to one uniform standard throughout the country and the extensive westernisation of the educated community. There may be qualified admiration for such a system, but all the same there is no room for doubt as regards its efficacy in spreading western influence among plastic minds of the youth of the country.

*(b) Christian Missionary Work.*

Along with the educational policy of the Government which sought to flood the middle class people with western influence, must be mentioned the missionary activities of enterprising Europeans who came out to India to preach the Gospel to the children of the soil, and gradually settled on educa-

tion for the furtherance of their missionary propaganda. The preaching work was in these early days confined only to the lower classes of the people, and the result was not at all encouraging. It gradually dawned upon those missionary workers that education, specially English education, would convince the people of the faultiness of their pseudo-science and the erroneous nature of their inherited traditions, and would endow them with a critical spirit which might subject their religious doctrines to a searching scrutiny and thus lay down a solid foundation for Christianity. Duff's first converts had roused such hopes, but subsequent history failed to realise them. However, the clergy would undertake to instruct the youth placed under their care by the laity and, guided by philanthropic and other motives, also persons outside their immediate jurisdiction. This explains the bearing of missionary enterprise on Indian education.

On the 1st December, 1758, the first school for poor Christian students was started by the Reverend J. Z. Kiernander, a native of Sweden and the first protestant missionary of Bengal, who died after a residence of sixty years in India on the 29th December, 1799, and whose portrait is to be seen in the Victoria Memorial Hall. The next European of note known to have opened a vernacular school in Bengal was John Ellerton of Malda. Carey and his associates worked for some years in Dinajpur and adjacent districts where they started a number of schools which were maintained for more than twenty years. But Carey's services were requisitioned by the authorities of the College of Fort William in writing text-books and compiling dictionaries and

teaching Bengali and Sanskrit to newly imported servants of the East India Company. The Baptist Mission was soon joined and helped in its evangelising work by other societies. In 1814, the London Missionary Society had flourishing schools around Chinsura where about a thousand students were enrolled, and received, for the successful working of these, rupees six hundred per month from the Marquis of Hastings—this was the first grant-in-aid made by the Government in Bengal for the promotion of vernacular education. In 1816, Dr. Marshman established many schools round and about Serampore, and the Serampore Institution for Native Schools was formed. By 1817, one hundred and fifteen schools were started containing on their rolls ten thousand students; the College was founded in 1818. In 1816, nearly about the time when the School Book Society came into being, the Calcutta Diocesan Committee was constituted to establish schools for diffusing useful knowledge among the inhabitants of the territories subject to the Presidency of Bengal by means of the vernacular medium. In 1829, the Church Missionary School was opened for the education of poor Hindu boys. Thus we see that even before Duff came to India, extensive preparations were being made by the missionaries for the education of the people of the country.

REV. ALEXANDER DUFF.

There was a radical change with the arrival of Reverend Dr. Duff. The missionary educational work acquired an importance unprecedented in the

annals of Christian missions in Bengal. Education was hitherto considered to be one of the items in a clergyman's life; it was now adopted as an important, if not the main, policy. Rev. Dr. Duff was the first missionary to concentrate his attention on the intellectual class and to try to bring them over to Christianity by means of educational institutions. By education he sought to root out from the Bengali mind all superstitious ideas. What Derozio sought to accomplish in the Hindu College was attempted by Duff in a wider field, in the schools maintained through the length and breadth of Bengal and also outside them. But there was a difference;—along with a knowledge of the literature and science of Europe, he felt a knowledge of the Christian scriptures indispensable. Reference has already been made to his insistence on the study of the scriptures; he was firmly of opinion that no reformed educational policy would be productive of any good unless joined by a devout study of the true religion. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland entrusted him with the object of starting an educational institution of the highest order—"in inseparable conjunction with the principles of the Christian faith." Immediately on reaching Calcutta in May, 1830, he opened an institution for the propagation of the Gospel through education, at once liberal and religious, on western principles, and with English as the medium in the higher classes. He began with 7 pupils, but the number soon swelled to 1,200. It was called the General Assembly's Institution, named after the Church which sent Duff to India. In 1843, due to the great schism at home in the Church of Scotland, he left

the College and founded another, the College of the Free Church of Scotland, named since after him, and conducted on the same lines. The two colleges were afterwards amalgamated as "The Scottish Churches College" in 1908. When he landed in Calcutta there were 5,000 young people at school of whom not more than 500 were learning English. At the end of the 19th century there was a vast change which we may partly realise from the fact that about 1892 the missionaries were teaching 1,20,000 pupils, nearly five times the number of students in Government institutions.

Dr. Duff's work is so very important from the standpoint of westernisation of Bengal in ideas, because he was fully conscious of the importance of an English education; to him it seemed that the English Literature and the European science were a necessity "for the improvement of the heathen mind" and for preparing it to receive the Holy Truth. In his speech at the General Assembly on the 25th May, 1835, he said :—

"The English language, I repeat it, is the lever which, as the instrument of conveying the entire range of knowledge, is destined to move all Hindustan."

It is a sure proof of Duff's farsightedness that he did not forget the importance of the vernacular.

He threw himself whole-heartedly, with all the energy he was capable of, into work for the people's good. He opened a school for girls in 1857; it was he who first pointed out the importance of establishing normal schools for training teachers, and he

was not slow in acting up to his own advice. Among the workers who tried to spread English education in Bengal in the last century, he occupied a prominent place.

As regards the influence on the ideas of the people which the missionary institutions exerted, it is sufficient to quote a contemporary historian :—

“ Each new school or college opened for the teaching of English lore, helped to Anglicise, in some measure perhaps to christianize the youth of Bombay and Bengal. If a taste for reading English books, for speaking the English language, for dressing, dining, disporting after the English fashion, gainsaying all kinds of religious doctrines old or new, passed with many a young Hindu for a thorough assimilation of himself to his English neighbour, many more seemed really bent on carrying the spirit of the new movement into matters more nearly touching the national welfare.”

—Trotter's *History of the British Empire in India*. Vol. II, p. 3.

The missionaries were not wholly occupied with teaching and with founding schools and colleges for the instruction of the young. They also did substantial work in connection with the compiling and composing of text-books and books of reference for use both in the primary and the high schools. Their names stand conspicuous on the covers of many a publication of the Calcutta School Book Society. They associated themselves with educational societies, encouraged schools founded by others

and in many ways took an interest in the improvement of Bengali language and literature. Though their ultimate object was the conversion of Ycung Bengal to Christianity, Bengal owes to them a deep debt of gratitude for their educational work.

(c) *By Other Agencies.*

Beside the Government and the enterprising missionary, the public in Bengal has always been keenly alive to the supreme need and importance of educational institutions in the country. Most of the Government educational reforms have been the results of public agitation. And the people were not content with simply clamouring for help—they took the initiative into their own hands and established schools. Ram Mohan Ray had his own school near Cornwallis Square which later on went by the name of Purna Mitter's School. At Hughli and Burdwan important institutions were started which prosper even to this day. Further, there were individuals who, guided by various motives, kept school in different parts of the city. In the book, *The Good Old Days of Honorable John Company*, some of those schools are mentioned by name. The School Society and the Brahmo Education Society were organisations for the spread of education on western lines. Outside Bengal, the Bombay Education Society, the Native School Society of the Southern Concan, Pacheappa's School in the Madras Presidency, Jay Narayan Ghosal's School in Benares are proofs of the existence of this thirst after knowledge prevalent far and wide throughout the country. People who would



not have combined on any other ground, learned to join together for the common good, waiving the question of orthodoxy or heterodoxy. Among other schools in Calcutta it will be proper to mention at least three :—The Oriental Seminary which gave sound English education unalloyed by missionary influences, the Dharumtolla Academy, managed by Mr. Drummond where Derozio received his lessons, and the school in Chitpur Road kept very successfully by one Mr. Sherbourne, a Eurasian, the son of a Brahmin mother, who numbered among his pupils the brothers Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Hara Kumar Tagore.

#### THE HINDU COLLEGE.

But the premier public institution which has been for more than a century a channel for the importation of western literature and science and philosophy to Young Bengal is the Presidency College or as it was originally called the Mahavidyalaya or the Hindu College which owed its origin to the enthusiasm and industry of David Hare, Raja Ram Mohan Ray and many Hindu gentlemen of the orthodox school. Sir Edward Hyde East, the then Chief Justice, was its first President, and the school was located in a house in Chitpur Road. For some six years it was in a moribund condition and changed from house to house, till in 1823, on Mr. Hare's intervention, the Government allowed it to stand on the ground acquired for the erection of the Sanskrit College building. It was in 1825 subjected to the supervision of the President, Committee of Education. The years that followed were full of glory for

the Hindu College. Its boys were the pioneers of all movements that agitated the country. Its existence was threatened in 1849, over the question of removing one Guru Charan Singh, a non-Hindu student, from the rolls of the College, and in the minute of the College Committee by Raja Radha Kanta Dev dated the 25th November, 1849, we find —“ At the establishment of the Hindu College, its managers pledged their faith to the Hindu Community that they would guard their religious interests with scrupulous care. A body of rules was accordingly passed, among which that which enacted that none but Hindu youths would be admitted into the Institution, stands conspicuous, and in keeping with this course the Institution was designated by the name of the Hindu College.” However, it weathered the storm and in 1855, in accordance with the despatch of Sir Charles Wood, it was taken over by the Government and transformed into the Presidency College, and chairs for moral and mental philosophy, logic, natural history, astronomy and geology were established. Since then it has been one of the main resorts of the better class of students in Bengal.

#### DAVID HARE.

Any account of the Hindu College would be incomplete if it made no mention of such illustrious names as David Hare, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Captain David Lester Richardson—men who by their disinterested labour, by their love of teaching and by means of their masterful personality contributed in no small degree to the importance and glory of the Hindu College and helped it

to be the great force which it was in the life and thought of Young Bengal. David Hare, the father of native education—a title which has been very deservedly bestowed on him—was associated with the Mahavidyalaya or Hindu College from its very foundation; he was indeed one of those to whom the institution owed its origin. So much had he identified himself with the cause of English education that when he came out in the streets, young boys would follow him about, clamouring for a free seat in his school, and this was not a rare occurrence. His main work, however, was not in the Hindu College but lay in another institution which went by his name. David Hare and Derozio were conspicuous for their sympathy with the spirit of progress. Wherever an educational experiment was going on, they would try, so far as lay in their power, to encourage it by personal help and advice, as in the case of the Hindu Benevolent Institution of which the proprietor was Babu Peary Chand Mitra.

#### DEROZIO.

Derozio's stay in the Hindu College as member of the teaching staff was not for long. Early in 1826, he was appointed Master of English Literature and History in the 2nd and the 3rd classes of the College and he resigned his services in April, 1831. Thus his stay there hardly covered more than three years, but within this brief space of time he exerted an influence which was very intense and thoroughgoing in its way. He was eminently fitted to guide the students to the great store-houses

of European thought. His acquaintance with the literature and thought of England and knowledge of the best thinkers of Europe, picked up in an astonishingly short space of time, is marvellous indeed. His library was stocked with new and rare books such as were hardly available in the ordinary bookshops of the country. He was only 20 years old when he was thus put in charge of young students—this might have gone a little way to make him popular. So great was his influence over his pupils that even in their private and domestic concerns they would consult him for advice. Though his tenure in the school was so short, he fully utilised it by the zeal with which he taught and the loving kindness with which he behaved towards his young students, trying earnestly to root out all ill-conceived prejudices from their minds by means of free discussion. And this discussion was so free that it raised an outcry against him in the Hindu society; it was said that his teaching had produced a body of young men who were trying “to pull Hinduism to pieces.” He was accused of having spread “lawless lust and western vice” by his sinister teaching; of having denied the existence of God, encouraged disobedience to one’s parents, and spread the idea that marriage between brothers and sisters was quite proper. These extravagant charges—which, it is needless to add, were absolutely unfounded and malicious lies—were brought forward against him and led practically to his dismissal by the managers of the College. He was not even allowed to clear himself, to know his lapses, if any, and to deliver an able and crushing reply to his maligners. This was a grievous wrong done to the young and brilliant

thinker and one remembers, to compare small things with great, the case of Socrates. Derozio's connection with the College ceased; and he was to be cut off from the world also, in a few years, but the impetus which he had given to the thought and ideas of Young Bengal could not die at once. It lived and caused a ferment and hastened the *sturm-und-drang* period in the life of the Hindu College.

CAPTAIN D. L. RICHARDSON.

The third of this remarkable trio was Captain David Lester Richardson. He came out to India in 1819 as an ensign in the Dum-Dum Cantonment, but there was in him a creative poetical faculty which found its outlet in contributions to the *Calcutta Journal*. In 1832 he was made a captain but became an invalid next year. His reputation as a scholar and poet caused his services to be held in high request by the authorities of the Hindu College who made him the Principal of the institution. He was to teach English Literature, History, Moral Philosophy and Composition to the two upper classes in the Hindu College, but mainly occupied himself with the teaching of English Poetry. Shakespeare and Pope were his favourite authors and "in endless alternation" he taught Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, the two parts of *Henry IV*, Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, *Rape of the Lock*, *Essay on Man* and *Prologue to the Satires*. Bacon's *Essays* was a favourite. As a result of the importunities of

students, he was known to have taught also *Taming of the Shrew*, *Timon of Athens*, and Young's *Night Thoughts*. From 1845 to 1849, he served as the Principal of various colleges—the Krishnagar College, the Hughli College and the Hindu College. His resignation in that year—a step he was forced to take—raised the dust of controversy in the Calcutta papers. In 1853 he was appointed Principal of the Hindu Metropolitan College, an institution set up just then in protest of some action of the Hindu College authorities continued in that capacity up to 1857. In 1857 he was appointed a Professor in the Presidency College, Calcutta, but in 1861 he left India forever. He was the author of several volumes of poems one of which was made a text-book for University students. The history of the Presidency College under him is its most glorious record. He was a sympathetic tutor, absolutely devoid of race prejudice, and was on terms of intimacy with many leading Indians of Calcutta. It was he who first created a genuine taste in Bengali students for the literary treasures of the west. A gifted scholar, a brilliant critic, a sympathetic teacher, his enthusiasm for his literary favourites was infectious and had a marked effect on the students. His capacity for teaching is judged by its result on the students, evoked by the admiration of even Macaulay who remembered his time off England, his teaching of Shakespeare. In his farewell speech, we find his own opinion of his work in India ably stated :—

“ I behold my own pupils, old and young, in every direction and I am led to make a general evaluation of the thousands of Oriental int-

I have contributed to influence or to mould by familiarising them with the thoughts and feelings of the West—with the immortal works of the noblest British authors. It is a triumph to me to have introduced them to such writers as Bacon and Shakespeare and Milton and Addison and Johnson and Young and Cowper and Hallam and Macaulay. I do not say—I am far from saying it—that in this great task I have stood alone. Others have worked as well, or better, in the same good cause—but I said to have begun the task at least on the system.....I was known as an earnest in the cause of Indian education long before it was so popular and well-cared for as it is now. I was the first Principal of a College ever established in India; and then it was not by the Government but by a Committee of the Natives."

The work of education through schools and colleges has as been going on along the lines of western methods in Bengal is being steadily initiated in the new ways. To this end many agencies have been co-operating—the Government, Christian Missionary Societies, other private bodies and even individuals have been working for the advancement of education. The increase in the number of matriculates (more than 19,000 sat for the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University in 1932) and graduates points to the extent of the work of western influence that is being carried on on a vast scale, though unobtrusively. Among the agencies for distribution of this influence, none is so potent as education, potent both in its results and the intensity of that

*III. Educational and Cultural Societies.*

In any survey of the channels of western influence in Bengal, along with the educational institutions are to be considered various societies, some of them extremely short-lived, some living to a good age, all of them organised attempts made from time to time in course of the last century and on western lines, to promote literary and intellectual culture in the country. There was nothing like this in Bengal in the pre-British days—the idea of dependence on the state was handed down by tradition; when state patronage was not forthcoming, people had to learn to group together for self-improvement, to take the initiative into their own hands and concert measures for the spread of knowledge and growth of literature. Some had distinct educational aims in their programme, which they sought to realise by means of schools and colleges, some were concerned merely with publications in the vernacular, while others were social and intellectual clubs for discussing and throwing light on various problems. It is certainly not pretended that the list given here is exhaustive; that is impossible from the very nature of the case—at this distance of time our knowledge of them cannot be perfect. All the same, for a correct appreciation of their influence, it is imperative to know as many and as much of them as possible.

## THE CALCUTTA SCHOOL BOOK SOCIETY,

And of these, the most important, so far as merely educational work was concerned, was the



Calcutta School Book Society established in 1817, which started with the object of the preparation, publication and cheap or gratuitous supply of works useful in schools and seminaries of learning, religious (but not moral) books being excluded, and the several languages, English and Asiatic, taught in the provinces under the jurisdiction of Fort William, receiving its first attention. Messrs. Carey and Roebuck, who were prominent in the affairs of the College of Fort William, were on the Committee of the Society, composed of 16 Europeans and 8 Indians. The Indian members were equally divided, the Hindus and the Muhammadans, the Hindu members being Mr. Ritujaya Vidyalkar, Radha Kanta Dev, Ram Kanta Sen, Tarini Charan Mitra, and the Muhammadan gentlemen, Maulvi Abdul Wahed, Maulvi Currun Hossain, Maulvi Abdul Hamid and Maulvi Muhammad Rashid. One of the three sub-committees of the Society was concerned exclusively with Sanskrit and Bengali. The first year of its life was spent simply in organisation work. It arranged with the Serampore Press for the supply of books like the following (practical arithmetic, copy books, account books for estates, etc.) :

- (a) *Ganit*.
- (b) *Lipidhar*.
- (c) *Aryyās* by Subhankar.
- (d) Zemindary papers.
- (e) The *Digdarshan*—a monthly issued by the Serampore missionaries ; about a thousand copies of each issue were disposed of by the Society.
- (f) An *Abhidhān* or dictionary, by Ramchandra Sarma.

Later, we find three Hindu gentlemen, engaged in translating Fergusson's *Astronomy* into Bengali, soliciting pecuniary help from the Calcutta School Book Society to enable them to proceed with their work. The second year 1818-9 appears to be more prolific in point of output. Among the publications we may mention :—

A Second Edition of Stewart's Seven Folio Fables printed at Serampore.

An Octavo edition of the same printed at Chinsura.

Introductory Bengali Fables.

Radha Kanta Dev's Bengali Spelling Book *Nītikathā* or Moral Fables on the model of Aesop issued conjointly by Tarini Charan Maitra, Radha Kanta Dev and Ram Kamal Sen.

Tara Chand Datta's *Monoranjan Itihās* (a parallel history, English and Bengali being printed on opposite and alternate pages).

*Upadeshakathā*, translated on the same plan from Stretch's *Beauties of History*.

Goldsmith's *History of England* translated by Felix Carey.

*Vidyāhārābalī* or Bengali Encyclopædia on the same plan. (" *Vyavachchhed* " *vidyā*.)

Pearson's translation of Dr. Bell's Instructions (selections) for the guidance of " Native " teachers.

In the third year of its existence, 1819, the *New Grammar of the Bengali Language*, compiled by Rev. Mr. Keith. *Golādhyāya* was prepared by the missionaries of Serampore, Pearce's *Brittānta* (Story of Geography) and Raj Mohan Ray's *Geography*, Pearson's

*Letters* or *Patra-kaumudī* were completed. The utility of the Society was so satisfactorily proved that similar institutions were started at Madras and Bombay. The Supreme Government came to its help with a capital grant of Rs. 7,000 and a recurring grant of Rs. 500 per month. Let us conclude this brief account of the Society with the remarks made by His Excellency the Marquis of Hastings with reference to it on the 15th August, 1818, in connection with the 17th Public Disputation in the *Natural Languages*, College of Fort William :—

There is a public object connected with the best stages which we contemplate from the College, I cannot close this address without expressing the happiness I have derived from observing the success of that useful association entitled the *Patra School Book Society*, in extending to the people of this country the benefit of European science and morals. The Institution has yet been a year in existence, but the number of tractselementary books, which have been translated from English and other languages, evinces an active zeal, for the diffusion of useful knowledge, to the highest degree creditable to those who have united themselves together for the promotion of this especial object. Their efforts have not, however, been confined to this department, they have been instrumental in preparing and circulating elementary books of instruction in the Sciences and languages of the country, and it is impossible to carry forward to the effects which their continued labours will produce, in extending the means and improving the mode of education that prevails among the several classes of the native population,

without forming a happy presage of the advance that will be made by the coming generation in general and technical knowledge.”\*

#### THE CALCUTTA SCHOOL SOCIETY.

As early as 1814 the necessity was felt for a Society whose business it would be to establish schools. The School Book Society was engaged in supplying books adapted to the use of schools, but, for its utility and successful working, it had to depend on the existence or establishment of schools throughout the length and breadth of the country. The success of the School Book Society emboldened the organisers, and the Calcutta School Society was duly and formally started on the 1st September, 1818, with the supplementary (and no doubt laudable) object of helping and improving existing schools and starting new ones. David Hare and Radha Kanta Dev were its joint secretaries. It established two regular schools—one at Thanthania and the other at Champatala—which were to act as model institutions and did not demand any fees. The two schools were amalgamated in 1834, and became afterwards known as David Hare’s School. There were also other schools under the supervision of the two societies which worked conjointly. In the first three months the School Society got Rs. 9,899 as contributions and Rs. 5,069 as annual subscription, chiefly from the Hindus. Its later career is not important from our point of view.

\* *Annals of the College of Fort William*, p. 580.

I have not yet come across any history of the Calcutta Indigenous Literary Club, but a book bearing the impress of the club is in the Radha Kanta House, Shovabazar—*Robinson's Grammar of History*, published in 1832. The title in full reads as follows :—

অর্থাৎ রাবিন্সন্ কৰ্ত্তৃক ইতিহাস সারসংগ্রহ, কলিকাতা ইণ্ডিজিনাস্  
লিটরারি সভা কৰ্ত্তৃক গোড়ীয় সাধুভাষায় কমিটি অব্ পব্লিক্ ইন্সট্রক্-  
শনের আদেশে প্রকাশিত হইল—(লেবণ্ডিয়ার সাহেবের মুদ্রায়স্)

“ The essentials of history by Robinson, published by order of the Committee of Public Instruction and by the Calcutta Indigenous Literary Club, in the polite language of Gaur.” On the third page of the book are mentioned the names of the *adhyakshas* or directors—twelve Hindu gentlemen, three of whom have the surname *Thakur*.

These are as follows :—

Sibcharan Thakur.  
Amalchandra Gangopadhyay.  
Atulchandra Gangopadhyay.  
Herambachandra Thakur.  
Kshetramohan Mukherji.  
Abinashchandra Gangopadhyay.  
Sambhucharan Thakur.  
Jayakrishna Seth.  
Jagachchandra Ray.  
Radhakanta Seth.  
Nasiram Mitra.  
Sukhamay Ray.

Unfortunately, no other information about this club is available.

## THE ACADEMIC ASSOCIATION.

It would not be fair to pass over the Academic Association, started in 1828 by Derozio, which met in a garden house belonging to the Singh family of Maniktolla and which had Derozio for its president and Uma Charan Bose for its secretary. Occasionally the meetings of the Association were graced with the presence of high officials, and of men like David Hare, who were interested in the intellectual culture of Young Bengal. Papers were read and various literary and philosophical topics were broached, even free-thinking doctrines were not allowed to lie outside its scope. The stir which it gave to the Bengali mind is evident from the fact that about a dozen newspapers were started to dwell on the views promulgated by the Association and a large number of debating societies were established on its model. The Association was afterwards removed to Hare's School—and Hare was elected president. Meetings were held once a week. In these, what really counted was Hare's personal touch as he mixed freely with the young men and accompanied them on their way home, talking all the while on various topics.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ACQUISITION OF GENERAL  
KNOWLEDGE.

Another organisation, one of the most vigorous and longest sustained, was the Society for the Acquisition of General knowledge started in the year 1838, for promoting application to useful studies and mutual intercourse among the educated Hindus.

It is not very wide of the mark to suppose that the establishment of the Society was due to a desire to work in a more general and comprehensive way than the Academic Association which was still living, but which had lost its hold on the younger generation. The manifesto issued on the occasion and signed by, among others, Ram Gopal Ghose and Ram Tanu Lahiri, contained the statement in course of its comment on this lack of enthusiasm : “ The fate of our Debating Associations, most of which are now extinct, while not one is in a flourishing condition, as well as the puerile character of the native productions that appear in the periodical publications, are lamentable proofs of this sad neglect.” It was proposed that the delivery of oral or written discourses was to be obligatory on the members, the topics being chosen by the members themselves. In case of failure to comply with this condition, a fine was to be imposed. The first meeting was held at the Sanskrit College Hall at 7 P.M., on Monday the 12th March, 1838. The Society began with nearly 200 members on its rolls. The discourses were mainly written in English, a few were composed in the vernacular, and the subjects dwelt on were varied in their character—history, poetry, language, social condition of the people, topography, metaphysics, anatomy and physiology. Among the active members might be named the gifted young men of the day—Rev. K. M. Banerji, Raj Narayan Bose, Peary Chand Mitra, Gyanendra Mohan Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, and others. David Hare was the Honorary Visitor, and Peary Chand Mitra and Ram Tanu Lahiri were the Honorary Secretaries.

Among the many subjects which came up for discussion before the Society we may name the following :—

1. Reform, Civil and Social, among educated natives.
2. Topographical and statistical survey of Bankura.
3. Condition of Hindu women.
4. Brief outline of the history of Hindusthan.
5. Descriptive notices of Chittagong.
6. State of Hindusthan under the Hindus.
7. Descriptive notices of Tipperah.
8. The physiology of Dissection.
9. On the importance of cultivating the vernacular language.
10. Poetry.

Almost all the educated Bengalis were enrolled as members. Gyanendra Mohan Tagore's and Kissory Chand Mitra's papers came up for special mention, for they exhibited much talent. The Society met every month in the Sanskrit College Hall. It died about 1843 either of inanition or on account of an outburst of temper on the part of Captain Richardson who was offended when attending a meeting of the Association to hear Dakshina Ranjan Mukherji denouncing the British Government in no measured terms. Richardson gave the Society a name—the Chakravarti faction—after Tara Chand Chakravarti, one of the founders of the Society and a prominent member of the Reform party, for its political tendencies.



## THE BETHUNE SOCIETY.

The Bethune Society was started on the 11th December, 1851, in pursuance of a circular issued by Dr. Mouat to the educated Bengalis of Calcutta, requesting them to meet to consider the best means of bringing the educated natives of the city a little more together, for the purpose of improvement by intellectual intercourse. The inaugural meeting was held in the Medical College Theatre where Dr. Mouat explained his scheme which was subsequently adopted. The new society was christened after the late President of the Council of Education (who had died on the 12th August, 1851) as a mark of respectful tribute to the memory of the illustrious dead. It had for its object the promotion of a taste for literary and scientific pursuits, and the encouragement of a freer intellectual intercourse than was in those days possible in other ways. The monthly meetings of this society were held during the cold season at the theatre of the Medical College when discourses on literature or on social or scientific subjects were given. In one of these monthly sittings, a distinguished Hindu gentleman read a learned paper on "Sanskrit Poetry," concluding with the words :

"It is in the vernacular field alone that the poets of Bengal can hope to distinguish themselves—the late John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, the educator of India's sons and daughters, was most anxious to patronise the vernacular poetry in Bengal. He advised all aspirants after poetical fame to turn their attention to the Bengali language. One of the last acts contemplated by himself was

the preparation, by means of a competent Bengali scholar, of a small volume of Vernacular Poetry, as well for the use of his female school. as for educational institutions in general."

This shows that Young Bengal was alive to the supreme need of the cultivation of vernacular literature.

The society was active in 1863 when Dr. Duff bade his last farewell to India. Dr. Duff had been elected President of the Bethune Society in 1859 and presided over its various meetings in which eloquent and interesting addresses were given month after month. It was active even in 1866 when Miss Mary Carpenter visited India. It was at a special meeting of the society, presided over by the Hon'ble J. B. Phear, that this gifted lady delivered an address on "The Reformatory School System, and its influence on female criminals." In November of the same year was given an illuminating lecture on Shakespeare, with readings from his plays.\* It had a separate section for Sociology but the subject was altogether neglected and did not come strictly within its purview, which was literary and intellectual recreation rather than any direct purpose of social good. It was living in 1869 as we know from lecture notices in the *Indian Daily News* of that year.

#### THE VERNACULAR LITERATURE SOCIETY.

Under the Secretaryship of E. B. Cowell this society undertook to translate a number of books and to publish a penny magazine, which

\**Selections from the writings of Girish Chunder Ghosh*, p. 634.

under the able editorship of Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra, the veteran Sanskrit scholar and librarian of the Asiatic Society, had a circulation of 900 copies and contained, in addition to 3 or 4 pictorial illustrations in each number, miscellaneous articles—historical, biographical, etc. The society offered Rs. 200 for each book written in compliance with its instructions. Some of its publications are mentioned below with the number of their pages and their price :—

	পৃঃ	মূল্য
✓ ১। রবিন্সন্ ক্রুশোর ভ্রমণ বৃত্তান্ত চারখানি চিত্রযুক্ত	৩২৬	১৮/০
২। পাল এবং বর্জিনিয়ার জীবনবৃত্তান্ত চিত্রদ্বয় যুক্ত	২৫৫	১৮/০
৩। সেক্সপিয়র কৃত গল্প	২১২	১/০
৪। মনোরম্য পাঠ	১১৪	১/০
৫। রাজা প্রতাপাদিত্যের চরিত	৬৩	৮/০
৬। বৃহৎকথা (প্রথম ভাগ)	১০৯	১/০
৭। হংসরূপী রাজপুত্রাদির বিষয়, একচিত্রযুক্ত	৫৪	১/১৫
৮। পুত্রশোকাতুরা হুঃখিনী মাতা ও নায়কশোকাতুরা হুঃখিনী নায়িকা	৩০	১/০
৯। ছোট কৈলাস এবং বড় কৈলাস	২৫	১/০
১০। চক্ৰমকি বাক্স ও অপূৰ্ণরাজঘর একচিত্র যুক্ত	৩০	১/০
১১। মৎস্ত নারীর উপাখ্যান	৭৮	৮/৫
১২। চীনদেশীয় বুলবুল পক্ষীর গল্প	২৮	১/০
১৩। অহল্যা হিডিকার জীবন বৃত্তান্ত	১১৮	১/৫
১৪। নূরজাহান রাজ্ঞীর জীবন চরিত	১৮২	১/০
১৫। বায়ুচতুষ্টয়ের আখ্যায়িকা	৪৬	১/১০
১৬। এলিজিবেথ (Exiles of Siberia)	২৬৮	১৮/০

Among other books we note *Hemaprabhā*, a novel written by Dwarika Nath Gupta of Mymensingh, and awarded a prize of fifty rupees by the society. The publications were all on sale at a low price, ranging from 1 anna to 10 annas, and on a liberal commission of 25 per cent. on big orders. The style of writing favoured by the society was as a rule Sanskritic, and did not lean to anglicism.

BENGAL ACADEMY OF LITERATURE OR VANGIYA  
SAHITYA PARISHAD.

The necessity had long been felt of a central and authoritative body to control the extravagances of the new growth. In 1872, John Beames, I.C.S., Magistrate of Balasore wrote : “ Bengal has so completely taken the lead in education and culture among the Provinces of India that its literature has passed out of the stage in which that of the other provinces still remains, and is now closely approximating to an European standard.” In its very growth lay the danger of there being anarchy or lawlessness in the domain of literature. The Vangiya Sahitya Parishad, or, as it was originally called, the Bengal Academy of Literature (the name points to the contemplated control over contemporary language and literature as that exerted by the Academy of France) was founded on the 29th April, 1894, with definite aims and objects for the cultivation and improvement of the Bengali language and literature. It is still a living force and is efficiently fulfilling some of its purposes—collection and preservation of old Bengali manuscripts and objects of historical and archaeological interest ; publication of researches

through its quarterly journal by means of the vernacular medium ; and publication from time to time of important manuscripts. It has published a Bengali dictionary on scientific lines—has been preparing an authoritative list of scientific and technical terms in Bengali, and has started a number of branch Parishads in the mofussil districts of Bengal and even outside it. A beginning was made with only 30 members, but in its twentieth year it had more than 2,000 on its rolls. This is one of the many indexes into its successful working. Though there has been since a falling-off in number, it is still doing much useful work.

#### OTHER ASSOCIATIONS.

It is needless to point out again that over and above those already mentioned there were numerous other associations which co-operated with these and acted as more or less active agencies for the conveyance of western ideas to the country. Some of these we may note in passing.

##### 1. The Asiatic Society of Bengal.

It was founded on the 15th January 1784 by Sir William Jones who continued as its President for 10 years and more and in whose time weekly social meetings were held in the evening for the reading and discussion of original papers on the history, antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Asia—selections of these being published in the *Asiatic Researches*. The society languished for a time after his death in 1794, when the meetings were held not weekly, but monthly, and in July 1800, we actually find a resolution for quarterly meetings. In 1806,

however, Henry Thomas Colebrooke was elected President, and that year was formed the project of the *Bibliotheca Asiatica*—a project never executed—a descriptive catalogue of Asiatic books with extracts and translations. The present site of the building of the society was granted by the Government in 1805, and in 1839 the Court of Directors sanctioned a monthly help of Rs. 500. The Journal of the society was officially acknowledged in 1843. It was this society which first of all drew attention to the importance of preserving old manuscripts and publishing them.

2. The Calcutta Female Juvenile Society established by 1820 which opened schools for young girls in Shamlazar, Janbazar and Entally.

3. The Gaudiya Samaj, a cultural association, founded in February, 1823.

4. The Ladies' Society for Native Female Education formed in 1824, of which the schools were made over to the Church Missionary Society and placed under the management of Miss Cooke (afterwards Mrs. Wilson).

5. The annual gathering organised by Iswar Chandra Gupta, where on the 1st Baishakh of each year (the Bengali New Year's Day) people of all classes used to come together and were diverted by literary programmes got up for the occasion.

6. The Bengal Social Science Association founded on the 22nd January 1867. The inaugural meeting was held in the Metcalfe Hall when H. Baverley and Peary Chand Mitra were elected Honorary Secretaries. Miss Mary Carpenter had been invited to lecture on the need of a society for

social science in Calcutta where patient investigation might be made to enquire about facts as a basis for legislation. Hence the origin of the association of which the object was—"to promote social development in the Presidency of Bengal by uniting Europeans and Indians in the collection, arrangement and classification of facts bearing on the social, intellectual and moral condition of the people." Among other papers there was one—"Female Occupations in Bengal"—read on the 30th January, 1868, by Babu Girish Chunder Ghose of the *Bengali*. Its meetings were advertised in the *Indian Daily News* in 1869.

In conclusion, let us repeat that all these societies, themselves the products of European thought, attempted to prepare the mind of the people to receive that thought and also to think on the same lines. The remarkable nature of these associations may be realised if it is remembered how unique they were in their time, how there had been nothing like them in the previous centuries and how they helped the assimilation of new thoughts and ideas.

#### IV. *Public Movements.*

One of the noteworthy features of the nineteenth century in Bengal—and by no means the least important one—was the variety of movements to which the introduction of the European world had given an impetus, if not birth. It will be our business here to describe the significance of these movements with reference, wherever possible, to the western ideas that prompted them. We shall see that though all of them may not have been the

products of such ideas, they were in some way connected with them—either, as a practical consequence they were translated into action—or, they were inaugurated to combat such heretical tendencies.

(a) *Religious.*

(i) CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

First, let us consider the Christian Missions. The idea of sending out a mission to India, or for that matter to Bengal, was by no means new ; reference has already been made to Kiernander, the first Protestant missionary who came to Bengal from South India whence he was ousted by the French, and who, on coming to Calcutta, received the patronage of Lord Clive. But the process of conversion had been going on since the coming of the Portuguese.\* In 1775, there arrived a second mission from Halle, but practically it did very little. In 1789, Reverend Abraham Thomas Clarke was sent to Calcutta by the Christian Knowledge Society but he received employment under the Government and was lost to the cause. Mr. Thomas had come to India previously to this. In 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society had been formed and next year Rev. Dr. Carey and Mr. Thomas arrived at Calcutta. With the arrival of Dr. Carey the work of the mission began in right earnest. He settled at first in Maldah and began to work in the neighbouring places. He was followed in 1799 by his valued

\* “ The Portuguese were the first to bring Christianity to Bengal. Portuguese adventurers . . . enslaved their captives and converted them to Christianity.” Census Report, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p. 169.



associates—Ward, Brunsdon, Grant and Marshman, who formed a group by themselves at Serampore. Carey was attached to the College of Fort William after this, and his work there was important from the point of view of the Bengali language and literature, but he was not wholly lost to mission work. The vernacular dialect was a powerful weapon. In all ages religious reformers find it convenient to preach their new doctrine in the vernacular. Buddha, Wyclif and Luther are examples on the point. The Portuguese missionaries realised the importance of this and prepared handbooks to train young novitiates in the vernacular. In 1801, Carey translated the New Testament into Bengali, in 1809 he did the same service with reference to the Old Testament. The translation of the Bible was considered a very valuable work, and Dr. Buchanan, Mr. Udney, and Rev. David Brown constituted a corresponding Committee for the purpose. In 1809, the funds of the Committee were increased from £200 to £500, and Henry Martyn and Thomason were added to the list of members. In 1811 was established the Calcutta Bible Society. It acted as a stimulus to the cause of vernacular translation and, as a necessary corollary, to that of textual criticism. We may realise its activity when we remember that between the years 1811 and 1849 it issued 602,266 copies of vernacular Scriptures, in whole or in part, of which one-fourth was in Bengali. To understand the advance the language had made in these years one requires to glance at Ellerton or Carey and to refer to Yates for comparison. There had been also an appreciable fall in the price of the books ; what cost

Rs. 24 in 1811 would require only Rs. 6 in 1849.

The Bible did not take up all the energy of these Missionaries; they were better organised in the process of time. In 1813 the Indian Episcopate had been established and Rev. T. F. Middleton, the First Bishop of Calcutta, came to India next year. There has been a steady increase in the number of workers since then. About 1816 the Church Missionary Society had 24 stations in India, of which 10 were situated in the Bengal Presidency. "Instruct the young, preach to the adults, and distribute religious books" was their programme of work. Accordingly, to execute the last item efficiently, a society was formed in 1823 to compose and distribute religious tracts. This was called the Calcutta Tract Society. We give below a list of tracts in Bengali distributed in 1823 :—

Memoir of Fatik Chand.

Mental reflection and enquiry after salvation.

Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

Harmony of the Four Gospels—Parts III-VI.

Life of William Kelly.

Dialogue between a Durwan and a Malee.

History of Christ, the Saviour of the World.

Dialogue between Ram Hari and Shaddha.

On the Nature of God.

Dialogue between a Scotchman and a Native  
Gentleman.

Extracts from the Gospel Magazine—Nos. I, II.

Reward Book for schools.

Scripture Extracts—Parables.

The Picture Room.

Catechism, 1st.

Catechism, 2nd.

Watt's first Catechism.

From the first number to the issue of the last report 78 tracts were published in Bengali, out of a total of 120.

Rev. Mr. Duff's work in the field of education has already been detailed. It was he who worked among the intelligentsia of the Hindu population, and all his first converts were young men with brilliant prospects, who left their family for the sake of religion. Of these, Rev. K. M. Banerji won distinction in his later career. The progress of the missions may be easily imagined when we remember that in 1852, there were 81,850 students in the Missionary Schools compared with 142,952 in 1872; and in the year 1854, a distinguished writer in the *Calcutta Review* thus describes the condition of the Missions:—"We hear of some 400, more or less educated, intelligent, active and zealous European Missionaries, engaged day and night in doing their philanthropical works, establishing themselves in the land, having formed no fewer than 300 stations, where they generally erect permanent buildings, and set their varied machinery at work, including no fewer than 2,000 schools which contain above 64,000 pupils of almost all classes of the Indian Community; gathering round them in their several spheres, altogether some thousands of their fellow agents, natives of the country and in various degrees educated, trained, obedient men, fully prepared to carry out the designs of their employers and actually

engaged in acting on the minds of the people, teaching in the schools, preaching and distributing books innumerable in the bazar, and at the *melas* or in various noted places,—as well as journeying about the village—pursuing their work of propagandism—spending on this work not far short of £200,000 sterling per annum.” But to-day the judgment of the critic is worthy of serious consideration. In the Census Report, 1921, p. 167, we read—“Christianity has made but little impression upon the population of Bengal when measured by the number of converts who have been made. The number of Christians is but 31 per 10,000 of the population, less than one in 300, and among Indians only one in 356. The total in Bengal, 149,069 is only one in 320 of the Christians in India, for the proportion of the total population which Christians form is very much higher in Southern India. . . . . Christians are more numerous in Central Bengal than in other divisions of the province mainly by reason of a large number found in Calcutta and the 24-Parganas. . . . It will be seen that the largest body of Christians is in Calcutta. To this body Europeans and Anglo-Indians subscribe rather more than two-thirds. The 24-Parganas, and Dacca, are the only districts outside it which hold more than 10,000, though. . . .” etc., etc.

There were newspapers and magazines started by Christians—the Vernacular Press thus continuing the instructions given in the school. The *Digdarshan* was based on Penny and Saturday Magazines as its model, and propaganda was carried on in the form of sermons, dialogues, and anecdotes

from the Bible. In the *Bangabandhu*, a magazine in the latter part of the century under Christian management, it is remarkable how the paper bears the impress of Bankim Chandra's influence—a few lines from the *Bande Mataram* are quoted as its motto, and there is an article বঙ্কিম বাবুর কৃষ্ণচরিত্র বনাম খৃষ্টচরিত্র, *i.e.* Bankim Babu's Krishnacharitra *versus* Khrishtacharitra.

Thus we see how the Christian Missions, by establishing an Indian Episcopate, translating the Scriptures, publishing and distributing religious tracts, starting schools and colleges for the education of the young, were eager and energetic in their work of conversion. Their attempts evoked great opposition—both from the orthodox and the liberal sections of the Hindu population.

#### (ii) THE BRAHMO SAMAJ.

But the Brahmo Samaj did not owe its origin to that. Raja Ram Mohan Ray's life was a quest for truth from his very early years. When he was 16, this quest for truth led him to Tibet. It was this striving after truth which did not allow him to settle down to a life of comparative ease after his official career in 1814, when he came down to Calcutta. During his stay in Calcutta from 1814 to 1830 he was connected with the reform movements of Bengal. The establishment of the Hindu College was in some measure due to his foresight and enthusiasm; with the change of Government educational policy he had something to do; he shared

in the political aspirations not only of his country but also of lands far away from his native shore. But more vital still was the new way of worship—so different from his contemporaries; he was opposed to the conventional Hindu worship of gods and goddesses, opposed to the caste system, opposed to the Suttie which he helped to abolish. He was a Vedantist and his years of stay at Calcutta were occupied with preaching the monotheistic doctrines of the Vedanta. In 1828, he started a Upasana-sabha. So far all was right; there had been no western influence except the congregational system of worship which he favoured; on the contrary Ram Mohan's papers—he had his own organs to preach his views—were anti-missionary in their tone and ideas. The Raja left India in 1830, and after spending 3 years in England and in France died in 1833. After him the movement was guided by Dwarka Nath Tagore and Ram Kanta Vidyavagish, but it could not make much of a headway. On the 7th Paus of 1843, Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore with about 20 companions was initiated formally into the Brahmo religion. The Maharshi drew his spiritual nourishment from the Upanishads, and besides questioning the infallibility of the Vedas and ignoring the sanctity of caste in the conduct of divine worship—steps which he was persuaded to take by Akshay Kumar—made no departure from the existing traditions of Hindu Society. There was no sharp division as yet between his followers and the orthodox section of the Hindus—consequently no sectarian feelings existed. It was for Keshab Chandra Sen to give a distinct shape to this legacy from Raja Ram Mohan, and in his brief career he

lived to see two splits in the new sect which he did so much—and who like him?—to create.

Keshab could not boast of being free from any western influence. He thought and asserted—the Bible was indispensable to man. (*Keshab Charita*, p. 2.) He learnt the highest truths from Christian scriptures, English history and European science. Shakespeare, Milton, and Young were his favourite poets. When he was only 18, 19 or 20, Young's *Night Thoughts* sustained him and fed his passionate mood. In 1859, he opened a Brahma Vidyalyaya in Sinduriapati where he began to teach theology in English. Debendra Nath's medium was Bengali and Keshab's English. Morrell, Cousin, Hamilton, Parker, Newman were his theological masters; intuition, revelation, penance, reverend, brother—these terms were bodily and in significance imported from the western masters. He also organised preachers for missionary work—an order of brotherhood was long forgotten in Bengal. He tried to give a scientific interpretation of these, and fully admitted the western influence on him. He was in close correspondence with Unitarians like Newman across the seas. During his service at the Bank of Bengal he used to compose small tracts in English. There is a portrait of Keshab Chandra Sen, in the Victoria Memorial Hall, where he stands with the *Bible*, the *Avesta*, the *Rigveda* and the *Qur'an* beside him; this illustrates the eclectic nature of his creed. The great influence he exerted on his contemporaries helped much to popularise western ideas in matters of theology. And out of the great schism was made the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj which is constituted on purely democratic lines as

the term Sadharan indicates—authority and tradition have no more any sway—the Sadharan Samaj prides itself on being guided solely by reason.

(iii) NEO-HINDUISM.

The many oppositions which Hinduism had encountered made it look to the efficiency of its own constitution and called for the establishment of new organisations. In the beginning of the century when the missionary activity was not so prominent, when Raja Ram Mohan's new mode of worshipping the Supreme God had not many followers, this call was not so urgent. But the interests of the Hindus were zealously guarded by such leaders as Raja Radha Kanta Dev and Ram Kamal Sen. Thus we find that when Sir Edward Hyde East, in the informal meeting leading to the foundation of the Hindu College, mentions the name of Raja Ram Mohan as one of the members, all the other people holding orthodox views without whose co-operation the success of the project seemed an absurdity, made known their refusal to work conjointly with him. In this emergency, Ram Mohan, with characteristic self-effacement, withdrew from the committee. We also know that popular songs were composed condemning the mischievous (as it seemed to the orthodox party) action of the Raja in worshipping one God after his "new-fangled(?)" theory. There was opposition offered to the Christian Missionaries and papers started for the purpose. There was some stir in Hindu society when Derozio's teachings revolutionised the thoughts and ideas of Young Bengal, and it was feared that all the Hindu



College boys might renounce their religion in favour of free-thinking or Christianity. Hence the removal of Derozio from the Hindu College staff. When Duff took the field, he challenged Pramatha Nath Dev, a rich and enthusiastic Hindu gentleman to prove the superiority of Hinduism. There were numerous fights in the residence of Mathura Mohan Sen of Jorabagan.

The Hindu College boys organised the Hindu Theophilanthropic Society and the first meeting was held at the residence of Kissory Chand Mitra, the Secretary of the society, on the 10th February, 1843. Its object was to teach the Hindus to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to enforce those sacred and moral duties which man owes to his Maker, and to his fellow-man. Its campaign was against Hindu idolatry and it sought to preach sound and enlightened views of the Supreme Being. The meetings were to be held once every month when discourses were given in English and Bengali on the nature and attributes of the Deity and general, moral, and religious principles. It also held within its scope the preparation and publication of Bengali tracts on moral and religious subjects and the reprinting of Bengali and Sanskrit works of a like nature. The attendance was fairly representative, Dr. Duff, Rev. K. M. Banerji, Akshay Kumar Dutta, Ram Gopal Ghose, Iswar Chandra Gupta and others came and spoke in the meetings. Evidently, it was a move on the part of the liberal section of the community.

The first occasion when we find the orthodox party organising itself was in 1830 when the Dharma Sabha was established, under the distinguished

patronage of Raja Radha Kanta Dev.\* But more remarkable than that, is what may be called the Gita movement, for want of a better expression. Among others we may mention Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani, who wrote a treatise on the subject and who belonged to the extreme section of the orthodox party; there was Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the distinguished novelist and man of letters, to whom Bengali literature owes so much, who neither renounced Krishna nor followed the orthodox school but tried to interpret his life in the light of reason and history through the journal *Prachār*; there was the Aryya Mission Institution, a school where the teaching of the *Gītā* was compulsory; and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, usually so reticent on religious questions, when pressed rather hard, would recommend the study of and obedience to the *Gītā*. Towards the end of the century, in the eighties, the “ Lord Gaurāṅga ” movement, bearing a clear stamp of the west, also made some noise; last, though by no means the least, comes the Ram Krishna Mission which sent its missionaries to Europe and America, and preached Vedānta which, it asserts, is the common meeting ground of all religions. In this connection, it will not do to omit to mention Bhudeb Mukerjee, whose power of synthesis was little short of the marvellous, and whose cultural Hinduism is in sharp contrast with Bankim Chandra’s political Hinduism, and though he did not belong to any particular movement he clung to the orthodox school and offered rational

\* Started in January, 1830, generally as an organisation for the Hindu religion and with the specific purpose of protesting against the *Suttee*, Vide *Sūmāchār-Durpun*, January 1, 1831.

explanation of his belief—prescribing courses of conduct in the family and society, to the nineteenth century anglicised Bengali Hindus. Raj Narayan Basu, Chandra Nath Basu and Akshay Chandra Sarkar who wrote generally in favour of Hinduism, are lesser lights in comparison with the above.

From the above survey of the Christian Missions, the Brahmo Samaj, and the Hindu revivalist movement, we may partly, if not in a full measure, realise the currents of thought which agitated the public of the day. The issues are not yet dead, but still vital and full of significance for life and literature of the times.

### (b) *Social.*

The religious movements which threw young Bengal into so much agitation could not but be attended by corresponding social movements in the Hindu society where there were specific rules against dining and generally mixing with people professing a different creed. Difficulty was felt in regard to those who renounced their traditional religion and embraced Christianity or Brahmoism—specially the former of these. At first they were legally debarred from the rights of inheritance. The bar was, however, removed by an act of legislature.

The converts from Hinduism were not only assured of their legal rights—it was a step taken by the Government but attempts were made by the leaders of the orthodox section to ensure their social rights—at least the right to go back to Hinduism if the converts so wished. If it was possible for

them to renounce their religion, it was argued, there should be nothing to prevent them from reverting to the folds of the Hindu Society, in case they happened to change their minds. Accordingly there was in circulation a small tract signed by about 100 orthodox Brahmin Pandits advocating the measure of receiving such people back after due penance had been performed and admitting that it was quite consistent with the injunctions laid down in the Shastras. There was for the pursuance of this measure a Patitoddhar Sabha which would meet at the residence of Shib Chandra Mallik of Amratola, Calcutta.

After the abolition of the Suttee rite, the question of widow-remarriage came to the front, and the opposition offered by the orthodox section to the proposed step may be illustrated by various incidents, of which the following is a specimen. About the year 1845, Moti Lal Seal, it is said, offered a gift of Rs. 10,000 (ten thousand) to any Hindu who should dare to marry a widow of his own faith. Moti Babu, in one of the meetings held to request the people belonging to the orthodox party to petition to the Government asking them to remove all legal hindrances, met with a rebuff; they would rather sign a petition for freely burning up their widows as was the custom in the good old days before 1829. But the tide turned when Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar entered the field and showed by quoting chapter and verse from the Hindu law books that widow-remarriage was sanctioned by the Hindu Shastras. The question now received a much wider consideration; Dasu Ray composed a *pāñchālī* on the subject; popular songs passed from

village to village ; even cloths had their borders printed with reference to the newly proposed measures, quoting lines from these songs. Vidyasagar's book, **বিধবা বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কিনা—প্রথম পুস্তক**, materially helped the cause. Within one week of its publication, the first edition of 2,000 copies was exhausted ; and the next edition of three thousand copies, was also sold out very early. Petitions containing signatures of numerous persons belonging to various sections were sent up, and through the advocacy of the Hon'ble J. P. Grant, the Widow Remarriage Act—the Act XV of 1856—was passed. For his help in furtherance of the measure, Mr. Grant received a public address.

The curse of Kulinism, or polygamy for the Kulin Brahmins, had long been felt. Vidyasagar's name is associated with the movement which aimed at its removal. His treatise—*Bahu-Vivāha*—is a historical account of Bengali Brahmins and shows up the grossness of their attitude towards women in the middle ages when they were considered to be in no wise better than dumb domestic animals. In his attempt at reform, Vidyasagar did not stand alone. The exertions of Rash Behari Sarma, a native of Tarpasha in Vikrampur, deserve to be remembered. He was a writer of popular songs and toured through the villages of Eastern Bengal, singing songs composed by him for the occasion—preaching against this pernicious custom ; two extracts are given below from his ballads :—

১।

বিভাসাগর বিচার করে,  
রাসবিহারী ঘুরে মরে,  
আমাদের যে নয়ন বরে,

তার কি পথ ?

২। তোরা দেখ্ এসে লো, বৌ দীপেরে চেরাক্ কয়।

(পোড়া) লোকে কয়, বিয়ে হ'লেই হয়।

(মোদের) অর্থ গেল, বিত্ত গেল, এ পথ গেল, ও পথ গেল,

(এখন) প্রকাশ পেল, এটা হিন্দুর মেয়ে নয়।

Moreover, in 1855, certain enlightened Bengalis of Calcutta and its suburbs submitted a joint petition to the Legislative Council for an act against this institution of polygamy. Another petition, largely signed by the orthodox Pandits of the Eastern Bengal and recommending the abolition of the custom by an act of legislature, was sent by Raj Mohan Ray, a Zemindar of Dacca. One of these petitions was signed by more than twenty thousand people. The movement continued for about 20 years; it did not receive the legislative support which was at first expected, but the people's views had changed through education, and the economic question also demanded greater attention, and for all practical purposes, the custom may be said to be extinct at the present time.

One of the evils which attended English education in its initial stage was drink from which not even the illustrious men, leaders in all questions of reform, were exempt. In 1864, however, the Bengal Temperance Society was started by Peary Charan Sarkar to counteract the tendency and the practice of Young Bengal in this direction. It had two organs to disseminate its views—one in English and the other in Bengali—the *Well-wisher* and the *Hita-Sādhak*. In connection with the legislative measures proposed or carried out in the last century, the Consent Bill deserves a passing mention.

It should not be presumed that the movements described above must have been the results of English education or organised by people imbued with western ideas, but it must be conceded that the principles of monogamy, of widow-remarriage, of a temperance society for the eradication of the drink evil that have been widely current in Europe had been accepted in this country after considerable opposition.

(c) *Political.*

Political consciousness was not a new thing with the Hindus. It was bound to come with the loss of political power. It was present in Ram Mohan whose sense of it was so strong that he could glory in the emancipation of other lands far away. After him, Derozio's love for India expressed in vigorous verse had no doubt its share in forming this consciousness in Young Bengal. The study of history of other countries must have stimulated it. Tara Chand Chakravarti's *Quill*, an English organ, helped to keep alive the embers of political fire and annoyed Government officers by its searching criticism of their action.

The impetus towards political organisations, however, came with George Thompson, a famous anti-slavery orator who was induced to accompany Dwarka Nath Tagore on his return to India in 1842. For his services to the country he had been hailed as the Father of Political Education in India. It was the acute distress of the Upper Provinces

on account of outbreaks of famine that drew his attention. His object was to stir up national consciousness and he lectured at Maniktala Garden House of the late Shrikissen Singh, 31, Fouzdari Balakhana, etc. He had great faith in the efficacy of educating the British public on Indian matters. The old Hindu College boys gathered round him and his speeches stirred them and the India Society was established on the 20th April, 1843, with the British India Society of England, formally established 4 years before (1839), as its model. Bengal began to take an interest in politics and Ram Gopa' Ghose's career took a new direction. By speech and writing, he made his voice felt on all important occasions;—in the Town Hall Meeting of the 24th December, 1847, where he silenced three prominent English barristers by his skilful arguments and persuasive eloquence and carried his point; regarding the proposed removal of the Hindu Burning Ghat from Nimtolla, when he made a very effectual protest; against the European opposition to certain "Draft Acts commonly called Black Acts" when his performance evoked the vindictive vehemence of his European opponents.

The British India Society was amalgamated with the Landholders' Society transformed into the British Indian Association in 1849, through the efforts of Ram Gopal Ghose and his associates. The work of Ram Gopal was continued by Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Shambhu Chandra Mukherjee, Kristo Das Pal. Harish Chandra was a power in those days. He made a memorable protest against Dalhousie's conquest of Oudh; but his more important work was the support given to Canning's



Clemency Policy, when that policy was severely criticised by European residents in India and when Bengal seemed to be speechless and powerless before the blind wrath of infuriated Englishmen goaded on to revenge by the horrors of the mutiny. Canning himself would, it is said, consult the *Patriot* regularly and attach to it much importance as the organ of Indian opinion. Nor should we forget the yeoman service rendered by him in connection with the Indigo Commission. “অসময়ে

হরিশ মৌলো, লংএর হলো কারাগার” ‘Harish died untimely and Long was sentenced to imprisonment’—thus ran the popular song. Harish Chandra was cut off at 39 in 1861. Shambhu Chandra’s was a journalistic career—he edited the *Sumāchār-i-Hindusthāni* of Lucknow, the *Hindu Patriot*, and the *Mukherjee’s Magazine* which later on was named the *Reis and Rayat*. He also worked in various other capacities—as Minister of Hill Tipperah, Political Adviser to the Nawab-Nazim of Bengal, Personal Assistant to the Nawab of Rampur. Shambhu Chandra and Kristo Das were life-long friends; and the subsequent career of Kristo Das Pal was almost identified with the successful conduct of the *Hindu Patriot* and he led the controversy round the Ilbert Bill. In this connection it will be sufficient to glance at those men of letters who tried to rouse a sense of political nationalism in Bengal through their writings—Bankim Chandra, Dina Bandhu and Jogendra Nath Vidyabhushan; Bankim Chandra through his novels and essays, Dina Bandhu in his *Nīldarpan* and Jogendra Nath through his organ *Somaprakāsh*, which began in 1858, and introduced Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour and

William Wallace to the Bengali public.\* We may also note that there has been, since the eighties, a movement towards the improvement of indigenous industries and this movement had been fostered by the Hindu Mela, when Rabindra Nath was a young man. It was in 1896, that the first Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Krishnagar where speeches were made in Bengali for the first time.

As the British Indian Association had become in course of time the organisation of the landed aristocracy of the Province, in 1876 was started a new society called the Indian Association which is still flourishing and which has done useful work in spreading political ideas among the intelligentsia. At first it was suggested that the association should be named Bengal Association. But Mazzini, the Italian patriot, had taught the ideal of unity and the Indian patriots saw the vision of a United India. They accordingly named it the Indian Association.

The conception of the Congress came from Mr. Hume. It was he who suggested to Lord Dufferin the advisability of there being a central or All-India body of educated gentlemen who would come together from time to time and discuss social topics under the presidentship of the administrative head of the province where they would meet. Lord Dufferin rather favoured the idea of their being an opposition party in the country which might criticise the Government policy and the conduct of the officials and thus work for the efficiency of public

\* Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 43.

services. When the idea was accordingly circulated to the leaders, they took it up eagerly and decided to hold at Poona a gathering of representatives from various parts of India during the Christmas holidays, to promote mutual intercourse and to discuss the programme for the next year. The first Congress was held at Bombay, not Poona where there was an outbreak of cholera. The second Congress met at Calcutta. To these gatherings sympathetic Englishmen would come and take part in the discussions that ensued. George Yule, Sir William Wedderburn and Alfred Webb were elected Presidents in the 4th, 5th and 10th sessions. Bradlaugh, a famous and active member of the Parliament, was present in the 5th Congress and was hailed with joy. In these years, topics like the following occupied the attention of the leaders :—

1. Reconstitution and gradual Indianisation of the Public services.
2. Separation of the Judicial and the Executive.
3. The Arms Act.
4. The growing poverty of the country.
5. The question of Indian labour on the Indenture system.

The leaders looked forward to the Parliament to remedy the evils which the country suffered from. Their idea is frankly expressed in the *Prachār* of 1889.\*

\* আমরা কি চুঃখ, আমরা কি চাই, তাহা পার্লামেন্টে দাঁড়াইয়া কেহ বল চাই, কেন না, পার্লামেন্টে ভিন্ন আর কাহারও দ্বারা কিছু উপকার হইবার সম্ভাবনা নাই।

“ Somebody must stand up in the Parliament and state our grievances and our wants, for nobody but the Parliament may do us any good.”

An office was opened in England for propaganda work with a paper, the *India*, for its organ. Surendra Nath's was the outstanding personality of the times. Reading his autobiography, *A Nation in Making*, penned towards the close of his career, we find that he had been largely inspired by western ideals and that he had been all along accustomed to look up to the west. In this he was only moving with the best thinkers of the times.

Speaking of Kristo Das Pal and others, he said, “ the new school of politicians, fresh from their contact with the West, familiar with Western methods and imbued with the Western spirit, left the beaten track and extended the scope of their work by direct appeals to the educated community and even to the masses. The new ideals and the new methods moved the people, and imparted to them an impulse that bore fruit in the manifold activities of an awakened national life.”\* This is Surendra Nath's reading of the political movement. And what about his own attitude? When about to start the boycott agitation in Bengal, the organizers of the movement commissioned Surendra Nath to consult “ some English friends as to whether they would advise such a resolution and what should be its form;”† and when it received the sanction—we feel tempted to say, the *imprimatur*—of Englishmen, only then boycott as a temporary

\* *A Nation in Making*, p. 198.

† *Ibid*, p. 192.

measure and for a particular object was proposed. The "moderate" party, whose great representative Sir Surendra Nath was, has always stood and even now stands for grafting English parliamentary politics on the soil of this country.

Sterner ideas and ideals have dominated the political field since; the Partition of Bengal in 1905 roused the opposition of the people and its consciousness of its own power—and though the partition has been annulled, the antagonism called forth by it has not toned down in any considerable degree. Politics is no longer a resort for fashionable and educated gentlemen of position and English education; even school boys and poor men have taken it up, rightly or wrongly, as their life's vocation and have freely given their life's blood to the cause. It is the dominant question of the day and has cast into shadow everything else, though it may be for a short while. Hence the importance of attending to the clear western impress which is manifest in the department of politics. In tracing the growth of the extremist outlook, Sir Surendra Nath in his reminiscences emphasises the nature of this impression. Says he: "Our fathers, the first fruits of English education, were violently pro-British. They could see no flaw in the civilisation or the culture of the West. They were charmed by its novelty and its strangeness. The enfranchisement of the individual, the substitution of the right of private judgment in place of traditional authority, the exaltation of duty over custom, all came with the force and suddenness of a revelation to an Oriental people who know no more binding obligation than the mandate of immemorial usage and of venerable

tradition,.....Everything English was good—even the drinking of brandy was a virtue; everything not English was to be viewed with suspicion. It was obvious that this was a passing phase of the youthful mind of Bengal; and that this temperament had concealed in it the seeds of its own decay and eventual extinction. In due time came the reaction, and with a sudden rush. And from the adoration of all things Western, we are now in the whirlpool of a movement that would recall us back to our ancient civilisation, and our time-honoured ways and customs, untempered by the impact of the ages that have rolled by and the forces of modern life, now so supremely operative in shaping the destinies of mankind.’\* The boycott movement over the Partition of Bengal, the Anti-Circular Society, the Dawn Society, the Home Rule agitation, the revolutionary activities, the Non-co-operation Movement with civil disobedience to fall back upon as its ultimate step—in all these the western influence is visible on the surface, and though they are not wholly due to it they are largely indebted to the ideas of the French Revolution, the Irish Home Rule agitation, the Young Italy movement, and the Civil Disobedience theories of Thoreau and Tolstoy. If terms mean anything the significance of the incorporation of such words as congress, delegate, vote, conference, etc.; will not be wholly lost.

In bringing this brief survey to a conclusion, we should like to repeat that there has been a great wave of western influence passing over all the varied walks of life and that the extent of such influence will be partly realised when we consider it

\* *Ibid.*, p. 308.

as moulding the public movements of the times in Bengal. In social, religious and political matters, our thoughts as they now are owe a good deal to the west. Interests of truth and justice require us to admit that.

#### V. *In the Law Courts.*

One of the important centres of influence in social life is the Law Court which, as civilisation advances, seems to be as necessary as human nature's daily food and where even people who would have been otherwise untouched by new ideas pick them up as they seek the legal redress of their grievances. The unsettled nature of Bengal, and for that matter India, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, was in striking contrast to the spectacle which it now presents. There was no uniformity of legal procedure in the country prior to the British rule; and this was a great disadvantage both for the people and the rulers, specially the latter, as for the successful administration of the land they required a knowledge of the peculiar manners and customs of very small areas. In some cases, the local *Punchāyat* had its full sway; the priesthood, like the clergy in England, who were not easily deprived of their legal benefit, was held sacred; the minor officials in ordinary cases used their authority in legislating within their own boundaries; the transit duty was regulated, so to say, without any regulation; every powerful zemindar used his own authority and extorted tolls from his own grounds. Cow-slaughter might be a crime under a Hindu ruler; not so when the power belonged to a Muhammadan. When on the 5th August, 1775, Nanda Kumar paid the

extreme penalty of law and was actually hanged, it came as a rude shock to Bengal to find a Brahmin so "scurvily" used. many immediately left Calcutta and swam to the other side of the Ganges as they would no more live in British territory where, they said, the rights of the Brahmins were not at all respected. Nothing could better illustrate the disparity that existed in those days in legal procedure in the two countries, England and India.

On their first coming to power, the English were not very eager to implant English institutions on the soil of India; they would take their cue from the Pandits and the Maulavis and enforce the decision given by them. But the Pandits and the Maulavis might be led by sinister influences; not even an intimate knowledge of the law books of the country could prevent it; and intimate knowledge could not be reasonably expected from every one of the Company's servants. Hence, as time passed on, the Government felt it its duty to legislate; the guiding idea being that "it is a primary and essential duty of every just government towards its subjects to publish and enforce an equitable system of law adapted to their actual condition and circumstances." The proposed code would, therefore, have to consider the actual condition of the people and the circumstances of the country, to take into account the principles of equity and to examine how far it was possible and expedient to make any great change.

The compilation of the Civil and Criminal Codes was the result of nearly a century's deliberation. As early as 1785, Sir William Jones, the illustrious founder of the Asiatic Society, proposed



to compile a digest on the model of the Pandects of Justinian. But nothing was done, though the necessity of giving uniform laws to the extensive dependencies of the British Empire in India had been long felt and recognised.

In the middle of 1835, the Indian Law Commission was appointed for the purpose. It will not be out of place to note here how Macaulay in his attempt to abolish legal inequalities between Europeans and Indians was assailed with opposition. His object was to remedy a great defect in Section 107 of the Charter of 1813, and at the special request of the Governor-General in Council, and with the unanimous approval of the Indian Law Commissioners, the Act XI of 1836 was passed. From his official correspondence in this connection, the following passages may be cited as illustrative of his mentality at this time :—

“ The principle on which we proceeded was that the system ought, as far as possible, to be uniform ; that no distinction ought to be made between one class of people and another, except in cases where it could be clearly made out that such a distinction was necessary to the pure and efficient administration of justice.”

“ On what ground is it that we are to make a distinction between the Englishmen and the Natives? On what ground are we to say that an inferior kind of justice, such as can be procured from dependent judges, is good enough for a hundred millions of our fellow-creatures, but that we must have a purer sort for a handful of our countrymen?”

In paragraph 23 of his last Minute on the subject, we come across the following :—

“ I am not desirous to exempt the English settler from any evil under which his Hindu neighbour suffers. I am sorry that there should be such evils, but, while they exist, I wish that they should be felt, not only by the mute, the effeminate, the helpless, but by the noisy, the bold and the powerful.”

In paragraph 26 of the same document he writes sarcastically,

“ We were enemies to freedom because we would not suffer a small white aristocracy to domineer over millions.”

At the close of 1837, the Indian Law Commission submitted their reports with the drafts of laws which they had prepared. But such was the magnitude of the task, and the responsibility of carrying out their suggestions so great, that it was considered necessary to benefit by the experience and deliberations of the judicial officers of all parts of the British Empire, before taking any legislative action. The Royal Commissioners in London submitted their reports in 1845, 1855 and 1856. All the plans and suggestions that had been received on the subject were revised by the Hon'ble Sir Barnes Peacock, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court—and his report was ready by the end of 1856. In that year was read for the first time in the Legislative Council his Act for supplying the British Government in India with a new Penal Code—a code of Civil and Criminal Procedure, which proposed to

weld all the “ jarring, bewildering outgrowth of Hindu, Mussalman, Company’s and common law ” into one uniform system.

The effect of this on the country can now be felt in the growing sense of democracy and the tendency to abolish all privileges attaching to particular situations in life—whether acquired by birth or worth ; to view man as man, dévoid of any extraneous accomplishment.

One indirect result of the law courts may be mentioned here. There was resuscitation of the Sanskrit Smriti literature in the nineteenth century, which seems to have been due to the impulse for training Hindus in their own laws and customs prior to their westernisation, whence to Christianity seemed to be but a step. Our proposition finds support in the introduction to the *Smritidarpan* compiled by Viswanath Mitra in 1858 and revised by Mahamahopadhyay Thakurdas Tarkachudamani, from which the following passage is cited :—

.....প্রথমেই পরদেশীয় শাস্ত্র অভ্যাস করাইতে যত্নবান হয়েন তত্পলক্ষে বালক সকল সেই দেশীয় আচার ব্যবহারে নিপুণ হয় সেই ধর্মের মতাবলম্বী হইয়া স্বজাতীয় ধর্মের আচার ব্যবহার পরিত্যাগ পূর্ব্বক অনেকেই জাতি-ভ্রষ্ট হইতেছেন, মনুষ্যেরা এই কারণের প্রতি দৃষ্টিপাত না করিয়া ভিন্ন-ধর্ম্মাপ্রসিদ্ধির উপর এই দোষ রচনা এবং নিন্দা করেন যে তাঁহারা আমাদের ধর্ম্মনষ্ট করিতেছেন ; কিন্তু আপনারা ইহার মূলীভূত যে হইয়াছেন তাহা বিবেচনা করেন না ।

“At the very outset the object is to teach foreign law and the boys become skilled in the laws and

customs of those foreign countries. Many lose caste by giving up the customs and practices of their own community and religion, under the influence of those alien faiths. People overlook this cause and circulate the damaging report against those of a different faith that they are interfering with our religion. They do not consider that they themselves are the cause of this."

The other great change in the law courts was the discontinuance of Persian and Urdu and the adoption of Bengali as the court language. The continuance of Persian and Urdu up to the regime of Lord William Bentinck seems to be due to the then civilians being fond of using that sort of phraseology as a result of their grounding in those languages. Bengali replaced them, but still the language of the law courts is a corrupt form, abounding in words and phrases which point unmistakably to their Persian source. Such language is peculiar to the province of law and is not in use in any other department. The importance of this will be recognised when it is remembered how far the English courts of law went to raise the East Midland dialect to the position of the standard language of England.

We find thus that in the law courts also there were influencing causes, that the codification of the Civil and Criminal Procedure helped to foster the growth of a sense of unity and of democracy in the ideas of the people; that the discontinuance of Persian meant more importance, at any rate less neglect, of the Bengali language. When we think of the place which law holds in the minds of the people, we may appreciate in a just measure the influence of the courts in moulding the thoughts of Bengal.

## VI. *The Press as a Vehicle of Western Thought.*

The press has been one of the active agencies which have helped very much in the dissemination of new ideas and in discussing the gateways of western influence it comes up next for consideration.

The year 1778 saw the introduction of the Bengali typography. In that year Sir Charles Wilkins, the noted Sanskrit scholar, made a set of Bengali types with his own hands and taught the art later on to Panchanan, an Indian blacksmith, who was an asset to the Serampore missionaries. From that day to this is a far cry. The printing press has been a powerful weapon in the hands of the people, and has brought about nothing short of a revolution in the matter of literary production which has been increased manifold due to its extensive and strenuous working. In the days when it was unknown, even works of great merit could have but a very narrow circulation, confined only to particular localities. Many poets would try their hands at the same subject, and thus there would be numerous versions of the *Dharmamangal*, or the *Manasāmangal*, the results of a battle of literary skill. All this has been changed, and encroachment on a subject treated already by some other writer is comparatively a rarity; "to fresh woods and pastures new" the modern authors would go; and though quick production may not have been all for good, the press has given an impetus to authorship which is a benefit so far as it goes.

In the earlier days, the purpose of the newspapers was served by the bazar gossip. There was a

State Intelligence Department under the Mughal Empire, but it ceased to exist with the disruption of the Empire; moreover, it was for the use of the State, not of the people who were then ignorant of their rights and non-existent as a political power in the land. "Private newspapers" (they can only be so termed by a stretch of imagination) in manuscripts were circulated for the spread of news. The absurdities thus made current, either intentionally or otherwise, could neither be checked nor corrected. It is said that Lt.-Col. Sir William Sleeman found the system in vogue in Oudh in 1849-50, and the *ākhbars* did much mischief even in the Mutiny days. But these hardly deserve to be called newspapers as we understand them to be in modern times.

In speaking of the creation of the Bengali newspaper it should be borne in mind that it is associated with the Missionaries of Serampore who, along with other educational measures, started the *Digdarshan*, and later on, the *Sumāchār Durpun* on May 23, 1818. At first it was feared that the Government, so very impatient of criticism, would be hostile to it but the then Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings, wrote a personal letter of encouragement to the projector, expressing his entire approval. "It is salutary for the supreme authority to look to the control of public scrutiny." At this time there were English papers in Calcutta—*Hickey's Gazette*, the *India Gazette*, the *Bengal Hurkaru*, the *Calcutta Gazette*—and these must have suggested the idea and the form to the Serampore group. The *Bengal Gazette* had preceded it, as has been finally proved by S<sup>r</sup>. Brajendra Nath Banerji and on reference to contemporary periodicals. Raja

Ram Mohan Ray was not slow in taking up the idea of a newspaper as an efficient medium for propaganda and the orthodox party followed suit and there was waged a war of words in the third decade of the nineteenth century in the vernacular press over the question of religious creed—the Christian, the liberal Hindu, and the orthodox or Sanatan views being freely expressed in the *Durpun*, the *Kaumudī* and the *Chandrikā*. Abuse and rancour found full vent. The next decade saw the birth of ephemeral papers, prompted by the teachings of Derozio, and engaged in discussions about the Eternal Truth—the *Sam-bād Prabhākar*'s being the only remarkable advent. This was the organ of Iswar Gupta : বাঁহার প্রভায় প্রভা পায় প্রভাকর— “Whose light makes the *Prabhākar* glow” and the pun makes it mean also : “ through whose light shines the sun.” Bankim and Dina Bandhu received their first lessons from him in literary composition and both were apprenticed to his journal. The fifth decade is an important one from the fact that Akshay Kumar by means of the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* was “ Indianizing European Science.” He filled the columns of the *Patrikā* with topics of a cosmopolitan interest and the comment of the *Nava-vārshikī* deserves to be quoted :\*

“ It is doubtful if any other writer has yet been able to mould the thoughts and tendencies of Bengali youth to the extent that he has done.”

বঙ্গীয় যুবকমণ্ডলীর ভাব ও চিন্তার ধারা ইনি যে পরিমাণ পরিচালিত করিয়াছেন, এ পর্য্যন্ত আর কোনও লেখক সেরূপ পারিয়াছেন কিনা সন্দেহ । ( ১৮৯ পৃঃ )

\* *Vide the Nava-vārshikī*, 1284 B.S., p. 189.

The second half of the last century saw the Indian press—or rather, the press in Bengal—both English and vernacular, recognised as a power when Harish Mukherjee's *Hindu Patriot* was the only paper supporting Canning's clemency policy, and when the *Somaprakāsh*, comparatively unnoticed, went on in its way bringing to the Bengali reader the political ideals that moved Mazzini, Garibaldi and their countrymen, teaching the people to have faith in themselves and dwelling on the ultimate triumph of political liberty for all people. We should mention here the *Vividhārtha Samgraha* of Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra, which was published under the auspices of the Vernacular Literature Society. In the seventh decade and the next, various papers which made a name either at once or afterwards were issued, propagating political ideas or propounding religious views. It was in the eighth decade, however, that the *Bangadarshan* came out under the distinguished editorship of Bankim Chandra Chatterji; even the very first issue bore ample evidence that there was a new spirit in literature,—scientific essays, serial novels, stray poems, critical notices, humorous articles—all find a place and the *Shrāvan* issue contains an essay on the philosophy of Comte. Of the periodicals that have appeared from the *Bangadarshan* to the *Prabāsī*, it may be said that their name is legion and that they have been working as bureaus of miscellaneous information and necessarily of western ideas.

It will be wide of the mark for our purpose to do more than simply refer to the Acts of 1835, 1857 and 1878, to narrate how and when and to what



extent the Vernacular Press Act \* had been repealed or strengthened ; to dwell on how the Government exercised in the past strict censorship whenever it thought necessary and shipped off undesirable editors to England, as we see from the cavalier treatment meted out to Mr. Fair of the *Bombay Gazette* by Mr. Elphinstone, and to Mr. Douane in Calcutta towards the close of the last century. But it is necessary to remember that, in 1835, Sir Charles Metcalfe repealed the Press regulations, subjecting papers and books to the ordinary laws of the land. His generous views on the press as a free institution are worthy of reproduction here :

“ If the argument be, that the spread of knowledge may eventually be fatal to our rule in India, I maintain that, whatever may be the consequence, it is our duty to communicate the benefits of knowledge. If India could only be preserved as a part of the British Empire, by keeping its inhabitants in a state of ignorance, our domination would be a curse to the country, and ought to cease.....We are, doubtless, here for higher purposes ; one of which is to pour the enlightened knowledge and civilisation, the arts and sciences of Europe, over the land, and thereby improve the condition of the people. Nothing, surely, is more likely to conduce to these ends than the liberty of the Press.”—Kaye’s *Life of Lord Metcalfe*, Vol. II, pp. 262-4.

The press has thus acted both as a free institution in itself, and as an effective means of education ; it has furthered the cause of education through

\* The Vernacular Press Act was passed in April, 1878, by the Imperial Legislative Council.

schools and colleges by supplying them with necessary books. The press was a corollary to the western education ; the relation between the two is of inter-dependence. Its importance as a free institution in the domains of politics and of thought can hardly be over-estimated.

### *VII. Environment.*

The agencies actively at work in disseminating the ideas and literary forms of the west in Bengal have been enumerated. It now remains for us to take stock of the fact that besides these, the western ideas had been penetrating into the minds of the people even through byways and unseen avenues. After so many years of British influence we may venture to assert that the Bengali temperament itself had been affected ; maybe it will get rid of this western impress in course of time but in the meantime the presence of the stamp cannot be ignored.

Whoever lives in the towns receives more or less the new touch ; imperceptibly perhaps, but none the less surely. Novelty has its charm. Due to the personal contact with the English, the Bengali temperament has been subjected to change. This personal contact or personal experience is possible when there are Europeans living near about ; and it is possible in towns. From towns the new mode or the latest fashion will penetrate into the villages, but the process will be slow. The large number of towns now in existence in British India due to economic reasons has tended to make this influence of great consequence ; otherwise, in pre-British days on account of the small number of towns the influence would have been comparatively of little consequence.

Then, again, the opening of railways, etc., has made communication exceedingly easy and the news of any change travels apace even from province to province.

The political situation makes the Bengali mind naturally subservient to everything British. It will be, I trust, quite relevant to quote here the words of Keshab Chandra Sen :—

“ Politically and intellectually, England is our master. We have been brought up in the school of English thought, and have been inoculated with western ideas and sentiments.”\*

Vidyasagar used to say—“ Dining or sitting, sleeping or walking, the English are superior beings in all matters.”†

This attitude made the mind prone to adopt British ways of doing things. We may note the change in the matter of sports—which go a long way to determine our tastes ; the *Mogalpāthān*, the *Dāndāguli*, the Bulbul fight ‡ have fallen in disuse ; and crowds would gather to-day on the football field or on the tennis ground. Even indoor games are growingly imported from overseas. Such terms as referee, goal, back, in, out, umpire, foul are household words now. Merely listening to school-boys’ talk, an unsophisticated person would imbibe western ideas ; it was thus that Sambhu Chandra daily picked up much, when on his way to school he listened to the discussion in a friend’s house over

\* *Lectures in India*, p. 50.

† “খেতে, বসতে, শুতে, বেড়াতে, সব বিষয়েই ইংরাজ শ্রেষ্ঠ।”—পুন্ড্রন প্রসঙ্গ, ৫০ পৃঃ।

‡ For an account of a *Bulbul* fight, the reader is referred to the *Sumāchār Durpun*, of February 8, 1834.

Butler's *Analogy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Shakespeare's works. English is in favour in the public services; whoever wishes to prosper in Government employ must be well-grounded in the language and all possible acquaintance with English life. The change manifests itself on occasions when it is least expected; even strictly orthodox families on the occurrence of a bereavement send out cards to their friends printed with black borders in token of their loss. The change of taste was also seen in Ram Kamal Sen—the leader of the orthodox party in all matters of social reform, but at the same time an enthusiast in the cause of education—when he became a zealous member of the District Charitable Society and issued a circular letter to wealthy Bengalis pointing out the evil effects of indiscriminate charity and the risks (from a sanitary point of view) to which almsgiving is exposed.

It is needless to dwell on this at greater length. It will be clear from the above, it may be hoped, that environment is not negligible as a channel of western ideas.

### *Summing up.*

We have in this chapter seen how western ideas were, and are still being, imported to Bengal, and noted the various channels for the influence that was and is still being exerted on the literature of the people.

The College of Fort William, established with a different purpose in view, contributed materially to this end by providing the language with a dictionary and a grammar and compiled Readers for the

use of beginners. Then we have described in succession the various steps taken in spreading the new learning; the Government inaugurated definite policies which were carried out not only by its own schools but also by the missionary societies, notably, by the Serampore group, and Rev. Dr. Duff, and by other agencies as well.

There were numerous clubs or societies or associations,—some of them have been described at length while others have been merely mentioned by name.

The various religious, social and political movements of the period have next been discussed in the light of their agency in conveying western ideas to Bengali life which was further subjected to these influences in the law courts.

Last, though not the least, the press has been fully utilised as a vehicle of western ideas—and it was an influence by itself in the direction of freedom of thought and expression.

Attention has also been directed towards the influence exerted by environment, and the byways of education—in the broad sense of the term—have been briefly considered. Thus all the possible channels through which the new influence has been carried may be said to have been explored.

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## CHAPTER IV

### Bengal's Favourite Authors

#### *I. Reasons for such Study.*

In considering the extent and nature of western influence in Bengali literature, or incidentally for that matter in Bengal, it is necessary and desirable that we should study the principal writers of the west who were popular in this country, and who must have in consequence stamped themselves on the mind of the prominent people, or at least the intellectuals, and thus acted as agencies, if not sources, of new thoughts and forms of expression. In order to do proper justice to this part of our subject, it would be necessary to ransack many autobiographical and biographical reminiscences lying scattered through the period and relating to it. It is not our purpose nor within our practical programme to chalk out regular periods and consider the results of influence in each; but all the same it is necessary to think of such results on different lines and within more or less definite range of time so as to make out estimates that may be useful from the practical point of view, in checking our calculations and shaping our ideas. At least we propose to follow this plan roughly in the present chapter, which, from the paucity of available materials, will be very brief. For Bengali literature cannot by any manner of means be described as very rich in such memoirs or works of reminiscences as are necessary for our purpose. Hence our results must be very meagre and our limitations great. It may be urged that the subject under

discussion is not quite relevant to our purpose of finding out, or measuring, the extent and intensity of western influence ; but we should then overlook and ignore the writers who had been mainly resorted to for such ideas as were brought in from the west, and were mainly responsible for the new currents. It may be submitted in addition that such writers were bound to influence the mind of the people, and their appeal to the intellectuals was not altogether very slight, so we find that the question is not quite devoid of importance. It is not a fact that all the celebrated names received equal attention from us, we were fond of Reynolds about whom we had a high idea while the pioneers of British fiction lay in neglect ; in literature as in other things, we receive what we may, according to our temperament, fitness and various other factors. It is difficult to give an outline of the course of studies or an idea of the popularity of authors, specially in the first half of the nineteenth century, because schools and colleges were extremely limited, and over and above that we must take into account the comparative reticence observed by those who lived in this part of the century. Such paucity is keenly felt by the student even in later literature, but in the earlier part of the era it is still greater. In spite of this, however, it is possible to arrange what evidence we get on the subject from different sources, and that is all that is, or can be, attempted here.

## *II. Poetry.*

The prominent names at least may be picked up without any difficulty. Shakespeare was one of

the earliest to be read and admired ; Captain D. L. Richardson, one of the best teachers of English literature, one who did more than anybody else to popularise English literature—in the purer or more precise sense—among the students of Bengal, and to whose readings of the great dramatist even Macaulay listened with appreciation, delighted in teaching Shakespeare's plays to his students. K. M. Banerji, one of the first converts and consequently triumphs of Rev. Dr. Duff, and also a brilliant scholar, declared in 1830 that Pope and Dryden were more to be esteemed than Hindu Shastras.\* Ram Tanu Lahiri, a successful teacher, and popular both by reason of his scholarship and excellent character, liked to read out to his students passages from Burns, Cowper, Thomson, Campbell and Milton's *Comus* in addition to the usual texts prescribed for class teaching. It may be noted in passing that text books had not then, as assuredly they have now, lost all relish and all appeal for those for whom they were intended. Akshay Kumar Dutta read Pope's version of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* while in school, but Joyce's *Scientific Dialogue* was the first book that came to his hand after he had left school, and it might have played an important part in shaping or guiding his intellect which was later used in "Indianising European Science." From the life of Rev. Alexander Duff by Dr. Smith, we learn that in 1830 Sir Walter Scott, Byron and Robert Burns were the favourite authors. Some of Shakespeare's plays were read over and over again, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, among others, were sought to be staged and they were

\* See *Calcutta Review*, 1881;—"Henry Louis Vivian Derozio."



staged by enthusiastic students,—Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo religious reformer, helped to stage *Hamlet*, himself appearing in the rôle of the Prince of Denmark. It may be noted in passing that Shakespeare, Milton and Young were his favourite poets. Young's *Night Thoughts* in particular fed his passionate mood in the period of his youth.\* Prof. Cowell, an eminent student of oriental lore, also taught *Macbeth* and Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*. In 1860 or thereabouts, we learn that the *Paradise Lost* and Pope's *Essay on Criticism* were the texts in use. Pandit Kokileswar Bhattacharyya (as he was simply then) enriched the pages of the *Rangpur-Dikprakash*, issued from Kakina, by popularising Shakespeare through his translation of notable passages from the dramatist's plays and also rendered into Bengali, portions of the *Evenings at Home*, e.g., the episode of King Canute and his courtiers. So great was the charm exercised by the English poets, and so well-known was the fact of their influence, that a certain reviewer † says, “Those who have now won fame and distinction among the poets of this country are all avowed disciples of English poets like Milton, Byron, Scott and Tennyson.”

Byron was so popular that his influence was to be seen easily in most versifiers—and the fact is

\* From the *Keshab-Charit*.

† The *Bāndhab*, 1878 :—এদেশীয় কবিসম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে ইদানীং যাহারা প্রশিদ্ধ ও প্রযতনামা হইয়াছেন, তাহার। সকলেই মিল্টন, বায়রণ, স্কট ও টেনিসন প্রভৃতি ইংরেজ কবিগণের মজ্জাশিত।

noted by a reviewer \* in criticising the first book written by Akshay Chandra Sarkar—his *Shiksha-nobisher Padya*—he had written only magazine articles before this—that the book was an imitation and translation of Byron. “In these days is to be seen due appreciation of Byron’s verse. We find Byron imitated everywhere.” Even a later poet like Swinburne had his admirers in the Bengal of those days—as a reviewer says in reviewing *Nalinī*, a book of poems “He is a worshipper of Swinburne.” †

### III. Fiction.

Fiction has been the most popular form of literature to find favour, and meet with appreciation, in Bengal, and here we may expect to get interesting models. Of far-reaching effect was the celebrated novel *Paul and Virginia* translated from French and reproduced in Bengali in the pages of the *Abodhabandhu* by Krishna Kamal Bhattacharyya‡ or as a publication of the Vernacular Literature Society. It was much appreciated by, and had a considerable share in impressing, the youthful mind of Tagore, as has been again and again acknowledged by the Poet.

\* আজি কালি বাঙ্গরগের কাব্যের সম্যক্ সমাদর দেখিতে পাওয়া যাইতেছে।

সর্বত্রই বাঙ্গরগানুকরণ দেখিতে পাই।—*The Bangadarshan*, *Ashwin*, 1874 (B.S. 1281).

† ইনি সুইন্বার্ণ এর উপাসক।—*The Vinā*, *Jaishtha*, 1285 B.S., edited by Raj Krishna Ray.

‡ See the *Mānasī o Marmavānī*, *Falgun*, 1334 B.S.

বিলাতি পৌলবর্জিনী গল্পের সরস বাংলা অনুবাদ পড়িয়া কত চোখের জল ফেলিয়াছি তাহার ঠিকানা নাই। আহা সে কোন্ সাগরের তীর! সে কোন্ সমুদ্র-সমীর-কম্পিত নারিকেলের বন! ছাগলচরা সে কোন্ পাহাড়ের উপত্যকা! কলিকাতা সহরের দক্ষিণের বারান্দায় ছপরের রোদ্রে সে কী মধুর মরীচিকা বিস্তীর্ণ হইত! আর সেই মাথায় রঙীন রুমাল পরা বর্জিনীর সঙ্গে সেই নির্জন দ্বীপের শ্রামল বন-পথে একটি বাঙ্গালী বালকের কী প্রেমই জন্মিয়াছিল!\*

— This may be considered with that other enthusiastic appreciation expressed in the Poet's essay on Bihari Lal. The *Romance of History* stirred the youthful mind of Bhudeb Mukherjee. Miss Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* also came to the forefront and strengthened the hands of the propagandists. Various English dramas were recast into the novel form, e.g., Dryden's *Cymon and Iphigenia*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity*. Scott's *Ivanhoe* was a popular book and carefully taught and explained to the boys of Hare's School, by the head-master, Uma Charan Mitra of Janai, in the days when Raj Narayan Basu was a student. Even if we ignore the possibility of its imitation by Bankim in view of his own assertion to the contrary, we might trace its influence on him through filtration by means of his eldest brother who used to tell

\* *Jivan-smriti*, Viswabharati Edition, Magh, 1335 B.S., p. 120.  
 "There is no end of tears that I shed on reading the beautiful Bengali translation of the European story of Paul and Virginia. At the beach, of what sea was it! What cocoanut grove was that, flurried by sea breezes! What mountain valley was there, whereon the goats were grazing! What a soul-entrancing mirage was spread, in the noon-day sun, on the southern veranda at Calcutta. And what a love was there, of a Bengali boy, for Virginia with her head tied in a coloured kerchief, in the grassy wooded paths of the silent island!"

stories from English authors to his younger brothers in his evenings at home. Bankim Chandra had been a voracious reader of English novels, of Sir Walter Scott and Wilkie Collins. Boccaccio's *Tales*, Kriloff's *Fables*, *Picciola* and *the Gipsy Girl*—in addition to a host of other English or European novels besides—were read and translated into Bengali. From the autobiography of Raj Narayan Basu \* we also come to know that *Robinson Crusoe* was selected for this home study and was in fact the first book outside the school course read by him. *Robinson Crusoe* was also the prize book won by S. N. Tagore when he was eight years old.† He mentions Lamb's *Tales*, and *Paul and Virginia* in translation, as his favourite books in youth, in the reminiscences of his early life. From the pages of the *Jīvan-smṛiti* we learn that Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* was read by the poet and he had to translate it in obedience to the instructions of his tutor. George Eliot's novels were read with zest, though their inordinate length was the occasion of some discussion as we know from more than one appreciative critique that appeared in the pages of the *Sādhana*. In the eighties and the nineties of the last century, the books of fiction that were most read happened to be the mystery novels, specially those of Reynolds. If we just look at the introduction to a Bengali novel planned on a similar line, we may form some idea of the favourite authors in those days.‡

\* p. 16.

† See *Āmār Bālyā Kathā*, by S. N. Tagore, p. 50.

‡ See Preface to the *Rānī Krishna Kumārī*.

\* কি ভাষার লালিত্যে, কি ঘটনার বৈচিত্র্যে, কি চরিত্র চিত্রণে, রেগল্ডই যে সর্ব্বপ্রধান, ইহা সর্ব্ববাদিসম্মত ।...অনেকে রেগল্ডের উপভাস অশ্লীলতা দোষে দূষিত বলিয়া ঘৃণা করেন, কিন্তু কথা এই, প্রকৃত প্রস্তাবে সমাজের দোষগুণ বিচার করিতে গেলে, সমাজের অত্যাচার, অনাচারের চিত্রসকল সমাজ আবরণের আবাস্তুর ভেদ করিয়া পাঠকের সম্মুখে ধরিতে গেলে অশ্লীলতা দোষ এক প্রকার অপরিহার্য্য ।

“ It is universally admitted that Reynolds stands supreme in the sweetness of language as well as in the variety of incidents and character-painting. Many look down upon Reynolds’ novels as spoilt by obscenity, but the fact is, in order really to criticise society, to expose the oppression, the injustice that exists in society and present vivid portraits before the reader, obscenity is almost unavoidable.” In the introduction to the translation of *Mary Price*, “ Lytton, Haggard, Scott, Marryat, Hugo, Dumas, Dickens, Rosbart and Reynolds ”—are all named and compared with regard to their intention and literary purpose—which would not have been the case if these authors had not been well-read and known to the readers.

These are only a few names—which are recorded in literature—and it ought to be made clear that there had been many more that were read and that had their influence on the readers and writers of Bengal.

#### IV. *Philosophy.*

The philosophy of the west attracted the intelligentsia of the country from the very beginning. The Cartesian philosophy has been thought to be associated with the Bramho Samaj as organised by

Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore. Before that, Ram Gopal Ghose and others—the brilliant scholars of the Hindu College—had read with Derozio, Locke's and Stewart's Philosophy. Bhudeb, the staunch supporter of Hinduism, was a voracious reader of western philosophy, and studied, with the discrimination that was usual with him, the doctrines of Herbert Spencer, Schopenhauer, Darwin; even at a very advanced age, Bhudeb was a diligent student of Locke, Hume, Mill, Kant and Hegel, as we may find out from his biography which has been based on his diary entries as well as other records. It is curious that even such a book as Hartman's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* is discussed in great detail in his journal.\* Bankim Chandra, while repudiating the utilitarian philosophy of the west, shows signs of having studied such philosophical systems as those of Spencer, Mill, Darwin and Hume, and compared their standpoint with the Indian. Rabindra Nath himself had studied western philosophy with a thoroughness which makes itself felt in occasional references to Spencer and others.

“হর্বট স্পেন্সরের একটা লেখার মধ্যে পড়িয়াছিলাম যে সচরাচর কথার মধ্যে যেখানে একটু হৃদয়বেগের সঞ্চার হয় সেখানে আপনিই কিছু না কিছু স্মর লাগিয়া যায়।...স্পেন্সরের এই কথাটা মনে লাগিয়াছিল।”†

Again, in describing the hold of materialistic European philosophy in those days, he says:—

“তখনকার কালের যুরোপীয় সাহিত্যে নাস্তিকতার প্রভাবই প্রবল। তখন বেহুাম, মিল ও কৌতের আধিপত্য, তাঁহাদেরই যুক্তি লইয়া

\* *Bhudeb-charit*, p. 229.

† See *Jīvan-smṛiti*, pp. 152-3.

আমাদের যুবকেরা তখন তর্ক করিতেছিলেন। যুরোপে এই মিলের যুগ ইতিহাসের একটি স্বাভাবিক পর্যায়।.. কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে ইহা পড়িয়া পাওয়া জিনিষ। ” \*

The system of Auguste Comte or positivism exerted, however, a remarkable influence on the thinkers of the period, specially in the earlier years of the second half of the century, or, to be more precise, between the years 1860 and 1880. It was said there were more Comtists in Bengal than in France. It is interesting to note how Bankim Chandra and Bhudeb felt with regard to Positivism. Bankim Chandra had more than once expressed his admiration for it, which had so much fascination for him as to force itself again and again in his novels and essays. The educational system in the *Devī-Chaudhurānī* followed with regard to Prafulla is after Comte's ideal; while analysing Amar Nath's mentality in the *Rajanī* or elsewhere in the same book he cannot help referring to কোম্তের ত্রৈকালিক উন্নতি সম্বন্ধীয় মত or to কোম্তের অনুশীলন তত্ত্বানুমোদিত হিন্দুধর্ম which was respected by the Sannyāsī in the novel. With what ardour he studied the system partially appears from the fifteenth chapter in the *Dharmatattva* where he advocates discipleship of the west in Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry as well as in Biology and Sociology. Elsewhere he compares the different views on religion as expressed by Kant, Fichte, John Stuart Mill, Seeley and Comte, and declares that those of the last-mentioned philosopher are the best,† and is glad to

\* *Ibid*, p. 145.

† See ক্রোড়পত্র [খ], ধর্মতত্ত্ব।

note that they approach closely the doctrines of Hinduism. Bhudeb is full of references to Comte, e.g., in his *Sāmājīk Prabandha* (p. 30) he mentions the English philosopher merely to disparage him by comparing him with the French philosopher or sage who taught—"Live for the sake of others." He amply discusses the broad tenets of Positivism in his essay on *Bhaviṣhya-vichār* in his *Sāmājīk Prabandha* (p. 163). The philosophy of Comte is elaborated and described by men like Raj Krishna Mukhopādhyay, and there are evidences in the correspondence columns of the *Indian Mirror* in the decade 1870-1880 of the popularity of the doctrines of Positivism and their suitability for being adopted as the new faith. The *Bāndhab* dubs the new set as "কোম্ব্তের প্র-পরা-অপ-শিষ্য" (1287 B.S.). All these show how deeply and extensively Positivism had been studied by Bankim and his contemporaries.

### V. Theology.

So far merely fictional, poetic and philosophical literature have been considered. Turning next to the theologians of the west, we may, by traversing the same lines, spot some names which may be helpful as landmarks. The popularity or wide appreciation of the Bible requires no elaborate treatment. After that, Fenelon, the French author whose prayer was translated into Bengali and incorporated in the hymn then in use in the compilation of the *Brāhma Dharma*\* may be instanced in this connection. We may also mention

\* See S. N. Tagore's *Āmār Bālyā Kathā*, p. 1.



the *Travels of Cyrus* by Chevalier Ramsay, which was alluded to by Raj Narayan Basu in his autobiography \* as having opened his eyes to the symbolic nature of the Hindu mythology as a parallel to the Egyptian. Draper's *Conflict of Religion* was a book which was much prized in those days and Bhudeb was delighted to find points of agreement with Hindu philosophy in his studies on Spinoza. Keshab Chandra Sen used to read again and again the works of Morrell, Cousin and Newman.

With the task of keeping alive the flame of theology as one of its specific objects was started the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*. Studying its volumes issued in the course of the first twelve years, between 1765 and 1777 *śaka* (1843 and 1855 A.D.), we find an article here and an article there penned in English, either vindicating the Vedānta doctrine or declaiming against Christianity or replying to the arguments advanced by Rev. Dr. Duff in support of Christianity. But the first large-scale quotation, so far as I know, is from *Rational Analysis of the Gospel*, by Carlyle, published under the name of Shyama Charan Mookerjee, Assistant Editor of the *Patrikā*, and under date Paush 1, 1768 *śaka*, issue No. 29. Then in the next year, *śaka* 1769, we find an excerpt—"Of the goodness of the Deity" from Brown; in the same year there are quotations on the "Immortality of the Soul" from *De Rerum Natura*, Arbuthnot, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Thomson's *Seasons*, Seneca and other sources. Passages from Brown frequently recur; there is

a long statement from Coombe's *Management of Infancy*; there are, again, wholesale quotations from W. Whewell—"The Creator of the Physical World as the Creator of the Moral World,"—"On the vastness of the Universe,"—"On the Conviction that Law implies Mind,"—"Agency of the Deity,"—"On the impossibility of the progress of our knowledge ever enabling us to comprehend the nature of the deity"—all this in *śaka* 1776. Then there are sermons from Theodore Parker, T. Southwood Smith and Rogers on *Final Causes*. Again, there is a long passage from J. G. Fichte, in three paragraphs,—the first quotation from him,—beginning with the words "Happy, contented, satisfied, with their condition, all men would willing be," etc. There is a discourse on '*The Religion of the Heart*' by Leigh Hunt, beginning with the words "Upon this innermost heart of man, God," and ending with the words "and hope for wings to reach the flower." There is, again, in 1777 *śaka*, a spirited discourse by J. G. Fichte, beginning with the words, "I cannot think of the present state of humanity as that in which it is destined to remain."

The *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* deserves a detailed treatment in this connection because it was the chief means for conveying western theology into Bengali through its literature for a long time. This influx of foreign theology came in for a good <sup>but</sup> comment in a contemporary newspaper \* *Deests* <sup>1</sup> may be reproduced here as follows :—

"Theodore Parker, Francis Newman, and writers like them cannot by any means be said to

\* *The Indian Mirror*, the 19th August, 1870.

possess the same views on every religious subject as the Brahmo Samaj; on the contrary many of the principles of this institution are diametrically opposed to those held by such writers as we have named above. The religion of the former is pure Deism more or less modified, but the Brahmo Samaj abides by a strictly theistic faith. Still, it would be a violation of the truth to deny that the influence of men like Parker and Newman has had considerable influence in the Brahmo Samaj, and this influence is nowhere more manifest than in the present condition of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj. In matters of doctrine and theology, and still more in its appreciation of Christ and his teachings, the Adi Samaj literally follows the authority of the one or the other. Till very recently long English extracts from Newman's *Hero Worship*, or translations from Parker's *Sermons* were given in the *Tattwabodhinee Puttrica*."

## VI. *History and Prose Essays.*

Historical writings have had an appeal and a novelty which the educated public of Bengal simply could not resist. That Tod's *Rajasthan* supplied poets and novelists of the new era with an inexhaustible treasure-house will be admitted by all. There had been other works, standard publications, we shall name here only a few. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a popular book, at least it was mentioned with approval and admiration and prescribed for the student.\*

\* See S. N. Tagore's *Āmār Bālyā Kathā*, p. 49.

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was a favourite book with Aswini Kumar Datta, as we know from his life by Sarat Kumar Ray. Bhudeb, whose taste for reading not even the hoary years could impair, read Guizot on *Human Civilisation* with evident appreciation, and Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe* was another of his favourites. It is interesting to observe in this connection that Bhudeb was not satisfied with Carlyle's *French Revolution* on account of its sneering tone.

Coming next to consider the prose essays that were popular and in vogue, we note that about the year 1830, while Derozio was stirring up the slumbering mind of the Bengali youth to argue and discuss all things under heaven and scrupled not to push his inquiries beyond even on to the heavenly things, the favourite book outside the classes, but constantly referred to by the teachers, was Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. This book with the *Rights of Man* by the same author—both revolutionary in their outlook on society—was shipped to Calcutta in an entire American edition of a thousand copies. Aspirants after literary fame were not wanting who came forward to translate some portions of Paine's *Age of Reason* into Bengali and their version was published in the *Prabhākar*, and the Christian missionaries were called upon by way of challenge to reply to it.

We find it on record\* that about the year 1850, while on a steamer trip to Gaur, a party of tourists of whom Raj Narayan Basu was a member enjoyed reading Macaulay very much. It was an agreeable

\* *Ātma-charit*, p. 32.

treat. Raj Narayan says in his autobiography—  
 “ These days we read only Macaulay’s *Essays*.  
 At that stage we were passionately fond of Macaulay  
 —he was a passion with us. It seemed to us that he  
 was the greatest author in England.” “এ কয়েক দিবস  
 কেবল মেকলের রচনাবলী (Macaulay’s *Essays*) পাঠ করি।  
 তখন আমরা মেকলে-খোর ছিলাম। তাঁহাকে ইংলণ্ডের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ  
 গ্রন্থকর্তা বলিয়া বোধ হইত। ”

There was a newspaper controversy in 1869 regarding the originality of Bhola Nath Chandra’s travel notes and in that connection there was a remark which is very much to the point for our study. “ The English-speaking native’s whole training is an imitation. As a school boy he speaks Addison, as a young man he writes Macaulay, and the closer and more habitual the imitation, the higher the position he takes.”\*

Bacon’s *Essays* engaged the attention of Keshab Chandra Sen—and Bacon and Addison were regularly taught (as even now) in the school when Sir Gurudas was a student. Addison’s *Spectator* was zealously read by Bhudeb† and in the days of his boyhood imitated by him. Satyendra Nath Tagore was very fond of Mill’s *Subjection of Women* and the book called forth some good imitations in Bengali literature. He admits this himself in the reminiscences of his early life‡ and declares that he wrote a pamphlet in Bengali on the same subject under its influences.

\* *Indian Daily News*, February 22, 1869.

† See *Bhūdeb-charit*, p. 64.

‡ See S. N. Tagore’s *Āmār Bālya Kathā*, p. 4.

“ John Stuart Millএর Subjection of Women গ্রন্থ আমার সাধের পাঠ্যপুস্তক ছিল; আর তাই প’ড়ে ‘স্ত্রী-স্বাধীনতা’ নামে এক Pamphlet বের ক’রেছিলুম। ”

On scrutinising the readings of Bhudeb we find, among other books, Prof. Huxley’s *Essays* proved very useful to him, specially those essays which related to social conditions, but he read his own meaning into them, without in any way impairing his own point of view. The following principles in Mazzini’s *Duties of Man* and other essays were specially pointed out by Bhudeb\* to his son :—

(1) God is, but he is not the Christian God—an arbitrary dispenser of Good and Evil.

(2) Life is not a search after happiness—it is a mission.

(3) There are no rights, but only duties.

(4) Equality and Liberty exist only in relation to duties.

This shows what a strong hold Mazzini’s *Essays* had upon Bhudeb and other thinkers.

#### VII. *General Survey at the Present Day.*

Rabindra Nath has inaugurated a new age and this does not appear as clear to our view as might be expected—because we are too near to the time-spirit. All the same, the epoch has its own absorbing interest and its own select group of writers to whom it listens with rapt attention. It is difficult

\* See *Bhudeb-charit*, Part III, pp. 337-8.

to set apart the strands, to count them and to make any calculation on the basis of that, because they are so many and so much tangled. Even the most casual view, however, will not fail to convince us that the continental authors are the craze now, they are the favourite ones in fictional literature;—that at present, while Kipling's handiwork repels us by its manifest Anglo-Indian proclivities and Hardy's by its deep tragic gloom, while Wells catches our imagination to a certain extent by his healthy and sane outlook on future life,—it is writers like Knut Hamsun and Bojer who hold us in thrall by the passionate throbs that beat in the souls of beings brought to life by them. It is needless to say that, for the present, English literature has failed to attract us, and that the continental continues to stir us and create an interest. It is not a rare sight to come across College students—undergraduates for the most part—studying English literature ostensibly, but lamentably ignorant of the great names of to-day or even yesterday, though very well posted in the comparative strength and excellence of continental authors. Such a state of affairs has been an indirect result of University education which, according to comparatively recent regulations, provides for a common room where students may congregate in leisure hours and talk or be amused; mutual discussion has greatly encouraged this excursion into the grounds of other literatures specially when the books selected are fictional in kind. Incidentally, the Bengali journals have profited, and there are articles on which we stumble

প্ৰাণিকীয় নীতিবাদ,—ববীন্দ্রনাথ ও ফরাসী দার্শনিক বার্গসঁ,  
 may be that all this points to a

real poverty of output on behalf of the English, but that is immaterial for our purpose; what we are concerned with here is a fact, not its cause or explanation. In theology, again, we find that in this our present age, which is not pre-eminently theological, there is much talk about Science and the findings of Science. Thus the Freudian theory looms large and colours the writings of specialists as well as general writers, humorous as well as serious. Einstein's Theory of Relativity has made less noise than could otherwise be expected, for it appeals only to the scientific mind and the scientific mind expressing itself in the language of the province and contributing to its literature is still an extremely rare sight in Bengal. Judging by magazine articles and stories, again, it seems fair to admit that Bengali literature now looks up to the continental authors more than to English alone—Dostoevsky, Romain Rolland, Gorky and Anatole France are the names fashionable for the time being. We are partakers of the general culture of Europe mainly reaching us through the medium of English.

One modern English thinker, at least, deserves specially to be mentioned—Bertrand Russell. He stands alone by his versatility as well as the boldness of his intellect. He has had something new to say in Philosophy, Mathematics, Politics, and is at the same time an original essayist. All these have combined to endear him to the progressive mind of the east, and Dilip Kumar, the gifted singer of Bengal, has considerably helped to spread his ideas among the intelligentsia of the province.

The sex-appeal which finds the strongest representation in modern Bengali fiction is due mainly to



the vogue of European or rather continental authors. All the notable writers of Germany and France, Norway and Sweden, Italy and England, are now easily accessible and rouse wonder in youthful minds by the strange topics and the stranger society which they depict. Strindberg and Ibsen, Brieux and Bernard Shaw, are read and discussed by all who have a taste for reading and the sex-interest is stimulated generally by the writers of North Europe.

In bringing this brief chapter to a conclusion, it is necessary to say that, comparatively speaking, in these days books have lost their original importance and do not absorb all our interest as they used to do half a century ago. Western influence has become attenuated just as the new ideas have been assimilated and the critical powers have become stronger and the novelty of the alien literature has worn off. It is therefore difficult now to realise how much importance was once attached to a book which at present arouses in us no interest.

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## CHAPTER V

### Influence in Verse Forms

#### *I. Introduction : Plan of Treatment.*

The influence exerted on Bengali literature by western models may be partly measured by examining its literary forms. Literature, for the purposes of study and convenience, may be split up into form and spirit, the outer body and the inner soul, as many people might like to say. Without entering into any metaphysical distinction between form and spirit in literature, and while admitting that they are mutually interdependent, not independent, each conditioning the other, it is yet quite possible at the same time to treat them separately. Such a method is to be preferred because it examines literature from different points of view and therefore attempts to present results in all their bearings. Analysis is to be utilised for the purpose of synthetic criticism, a purpose ulterior no doubt but necessary all the same for proper appreciation. This then, is the justification that can be offered here for treating of western influence exclusively in forms of expression in Bengali literature. Such forms of expression may be taken up and treated successively as belonging to the species of prose and verse, the drama, an intermediate form between the two, is conventionally considered under the latter head. But on account of its intrinsic importance as a

distinct species of literary composition, no less than for its being peculiarly inspired by western models, the drama deserves to be dwelt on by itself and in more details than the lyric or the epic variety. Accordingly, in this study of western influence in Bengali literature, the drama should be taken up separately after other verse forms are considered.

Like many other terms current in literary criticism and indispensable on account of the consequent convenience, the word 'form' presents difficulties in the way of a strict and logical definition. It is ambiguous, having different shades of meaning, and its use in any exclusive sense is a danger to the understanding. Applied to poetry, it may be interpreted as the metrical pattern or frame in which the words are set, or the words themselves; it may, again, refer to the time-honoured system of classification, of dividing poetry into epic, lyric and dramatic types. It may not be unseasonable at this stage to draw attention to the fact that these divisions, however distinct, break down when we come to the intermediate kinds, when we pass from one kind to another. Thus there are affinities between the drama and the epic which should not escape notice. Then again, the significance of abstract forms like the sonnet or the epic should not be overlooked, as they constitute an important part or feature of the poem. We cannot, therefore, neglect any particular element as unimportant for our purpose, nor can we explain the word 'form' in any particular sense; the safest way is to give it as wide a meaning as possible. In order, however, to treat the changes in verse forms comprehensively, it is necessary to take the various elements one by one,

—the words themselves, or Poetic Diction; the division into stanzas; the division into rhymed and unrhymed or blank verse; other metrical changes; and then the epic, the lyric and the dramatic varieties. Let us proceed to discuss such changes in each as have been due to western influence.

## II. Poetic Diction.

Taking the word as the unit it seems that along with other things there have been changes in Poetic Diction and that some of these may be attributed to western influence. There has been a move towards colloquialisation, and away from the partiality for heavy compounds laden with metaphors; in this there is a contrast between the present and the past; between what is and what has been. There is also an attempt towards a contraction of words—this might be explained away as formed on the basis of substantive verbs according to Sanskrit Grammar, popularly known as *nāma-dhātus*; but they are based on an analogous case, not the same case. As these had their origin in Michael Madhu Sudan's poems, they are usually associated with his name, e.g., মথিয়া, দহিয়া, হেরিনু, পশিলাম (*mathiā, dahiā herinu, pashilām*), etc.\* Then, again, on the other

\* Pandit Mahesh Chandra Sarma of Dinajpur wrote a letter to the *Soma-prakāśh* to complain against the editor of the *Mitra-prakāśh* for his admiration of Madhu Sudan.

“দত্ত মহাশয় তাঁহার কাব্যে একপ্রকার নূতন বাঙ্গালা ভাষা আবিষ্কৃত করিয়াছেন।  
একুপ ভাষা যে বঙ্গদেশের কোন অঞ্চলে কোন কালে প্রচলিত ছিল একুপ বোধ হয়  
না।.....এতদ্ভিন্ন মেঘনাদবধ কাব্যে ক্রিষ্টতা সমাপ্ত-পুনরাপ্ততা ও কষ্টতা অভূতি দোষও  
বহুতর।”

hand, many artificial forms once profusely used are fast disappearing; e.g., *kailā* as in সাজ বলি কৈলা রব *Vidyāsundar* (Basumati Edition, p. 108). Inversion of the syntax is also a new characteristic and a frequent one. How the rules of Sanskrit Grammar are violated deliberately will appear from Madhu Sudan's coinage of the word, *Vārunī*, feminine of *Varuna*, the water-god, in preference to the correct form *Varunānī*, for the new word was more musical and if it was condemned by the grammarians as wrong, so far as Madhu Sudan was concerned "it did not matter." This characteristic attempt on the part of the great innovator was relished and noted by his friend, Bhola Nath Chandra, who declared over this matter "His Bengali words are cast upon the European model."\* That was the case with him, inspite of his knowledge of Sanskrit and consulting the Sanskrit lexicon always at need. *Ānuprāsa* and *Yamaka*—puns and alliterations—were the bequests of a preceding age, but they were generally viewed with disfavour by people who had received English education. They survived in Michael Madhu Sudan's verse, because they were a necessity to him as he had to cope with difficulties in the way of blank verse by deceiving the ears of the public. The poets that followed were guided by Madhu Sudan's efforts and continued what he had started.

He found fault with commas and semicolons, English marks of punctuation, and said that *dānilā*, *kujanilā*, *stutilā*, etc., were innovations (নূতন ক্রিয়াপদের অবিচার) and that the proper forms, according to Bengali Grammar, would be *dilā*, *kūjilā*, *stabilā*, etc.—The *Soma-prakāsh*, July 7, 1870.

\* Biography of Michael Madhu Sudan Dutta (in Bengali), by Jogindra Nath Basu, 5th Edition, p. 671.

## III. Metre and Stanza.

Bharat Chandra Kavi-gunakar, the last great poet in Bengal of the pre-British period, was a metrist with very considerable skill, and it will not do to forget his achievements in this respect; he revealed to his generation many avenues through which the Bengali verse could appeal to its readers. To the stereotyped measures of *payār* and *tripadī* he added many others and contributed mobility to the existing ones, *e.g.*, জয় জয় হর রঙ্গিয়া, *Annadāmangal*, page 19 (Basumati Edition) :

- (a) আই আই ওই বুড়া কি এই গৌরীর বর লো ;  
 (b) ওহে বিনোদ রায়, ধীরে ধীরে যাও হে  
 (c) জয় চামুণ্ডে, জয় চামুণ্ডে, জয় চামুণ্ডে, জয় চামুণ্ডে ;  
       করকলিতাসিবরাভয়মুণ্ডে ;  
 (d) কুম্ভমে পুন পুন        ভ্রমর গুণ গুণ  
       মদন দিল গুণ ধনুক হলে ; etc.

Looking back across the interval of almost three-quarters of a century we find many metres then prevalent but now difficult for us to distinguish. One of them was *bhanga-payār*, illustrated in the following verses :—

শুন ওহে যুবাগণ,        শুন ওহে যুবাগণ,  
       করনা করনা কভু প্রেম আকিঞ্চন ।  
 তায় উঠিবে কেবল,        তায় উঠিবে কেবল,  
       বিচ্ছেদ বিকার রূপ বিষম গরল । \*

\* The *Navaprabandha*, May, 1869.

Another was *kunja-latikā* :

রুষিয়া ভ্রমর কয় শুন ছরাশয় ।  
 তোর সনে বাদ মম উপযুক্ত নয় ॥  
 আমি যে কেমন জন জানিবি কেমনে ।  
 জানয়ে যানীর যান মহামানি জনে ॥ \*

Another was called *utsāhinī* :

ঝাঁকিল সেনাগণ, ছাড়িয়ে গরজন, ভীষণ করে রণ গর্বে ।  
 আননে বহে নীর, মানস নহে স্থির, তেজিছে নানা তীর সর্বে ॥ †

It is better to put down 1857 as the year in which attempts began to be made at inventing new metres, and sometimes adapting them from western practice. Iswar Chandra Gupta of the *Samvād-Prabhākar* deserves mention in this respect. Turning over the pages of his journal, the reader will come across names of metres like *payār*, *champakalatikā*, *vīra-ranjinī*, *lavanga-latā*. He encouraged budding poets to compose or translate from English authors, and arranged prizes to be given to best renderings in a public meeting held on the first day of each Bengali year. In this way there was an attempt to render alternate rhymes into corresponding Bengali verse and to affiliate it to the native nomenclature by calling it the *gauna-payār*, e.g.,

‘ Then, pilgrim, turn, thy cares forego ;  
 All earth-born cares are wrong ;

L.  
ere  
accor  
he Son.

\* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*

(gali), by

Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long.'

These lines are thus rendered :

ফেরো তবে, তাজ তব ভাবনা পথিক,  
লৌকিক ভাবনাচয় অলীক নিশ্চয় ;  
মহীজ অভাব মনুজের অনধিক,  
যে কিঞ্চিৎ, তাও নাহি বহুদিন রয় ।

The translator (Mr. D——), in a delightful note, says that while the current *payār* may be described as *mukhya* or principal, the innovation (which, by the way, he hopes, will please the Bengali-reading public as it has pleased the readers of England and other countries) may be called *gauna*, or indirect, *payār*.\* This attempt was a far cry from the traditional *champaka-latikā* ; as in

এই এই সেই সেই সেই সেই এই এই,  
এ প্রকার বারবার কত আর করিব ।  
যে আশায় হোলো আসা, পূরিল না সেই আশা,  
কত আর ছেড়ে বাসা, আশাফেলে চরিব ?

Similarly of *lavanga-latā chaupadī* :

ভ্রাস্তি করি পরিহার                      শাস্তিজল কর সার,  
মনের আগুন আর জেলোনা রে জেলো না ।

\* *Samvād-Prabhākar*, 1st Vaishakh, 1265 B.S.

পারিতোষিকদাতার অভিপ্রায় অনুসারে আমি উক্ত কবিতা ইংরাজী মূলের স্থায় গোণ-পয়ারে অনুবাদ করিলাম, অর্থাৎ প্রচলিত পয়ার ছন্দকে মূখ্য পয়ার বলা যায়, কিন্তু প্রস্তাবিত কবিতায় এক চরণ অন্তর, অর্থাৎ প্রথম ও তৃতীয়, দ্বিতীয় ও চতুর্থ চরণে মিল আছে, অতএব ইহার নাম গোণ-পয়ার বলা যাইতে পারে, এইরূপ ছন্দ সচরাচর ব্যবহার না থাকায়, প্রথমতঃ কর্ণের সহিত কিঞ্চিৎ স্বন্দ হইবার সম্ভাবনা আছে, কিন্তু ক্রমে সেই স্বন্দ অবশ্যই বন্ধ হইয়া কেবল যানন্দের হেতু হইবেক ।



স্থির থাক একমতে,

গতি কর একপথে

কোনোরূপ কারো মতে হেলোনা রে হেলো না ॥

Prominent versifiers of this era like Nidhu Babu and Dasarathi Ray widened the scope of the metre still further ; but no brilliant results could be noticed till the appearance of Madhu Sudan on the field of Bengali literature. The case of Rangalal is remarkable indeed ; appearing earlier as a writer of Bengali verse and with English models before him which appealed to and interested him, he neglected to invent suitable metres, to step out of the beaten track. To express the heroic sentiment he resorted to the traditional *māl-jhāmp* measure in the *Karmadevī*, and did not transcend the use of *payār* in his *Padminīr Upākhyān*.

But once we come to Michael Madhu Sudan we detect at once an earnest search after new measures. He is dissatisfied with the existing verse-machinery, and the “ tremendous rebel ” in him could not rest contented with its disadvantages and imperfections. In writing on the verse of his intended work *Subhadrā*, he explains : ‘ The verse is what in English we would call Alexandrine, *i.e.*, containing 6 feet. The longest verse in our language is the 7-footed *Payār* but that is like the Greek and Roman Hexameter, too long and pompous for dramatic purposes. The Greek and Latin Dramas are not written in Hexameter. Our 7-footed verse is our “ heroic measure.” ’\* This was not a solitary case ; when he planned to write an epic

\* *Māikel Madhu Sūdan Datter Jivan-charit*, by Jogindra Nath Basu, p. 455.

on the conquest of Ceylon—*Simhal-Vijay*—in pursuance of the friendly advice of Raj Narayan Basu, he wished to do so in the *ottava rima* or eight-line stanzas in the manner of Tasso.\* His achievements in the introduction of blank verse to Bengali literature will be discussed later; but that also goes to support the statement made above, about his being dissatisfied with the conditions of literary composition and trying to improve upon them. It is interesting to note that in *Vrajāṅganā*, “a volume of odes” as he called it, he found ample scope for metrical experiments and his varied attempts all won success. One of the first, if not the first, to make use of stanzas of 8, 5, 6 lines each with various rhyming arrangements, he scores a series of brilliant triumphs from the opening piece to the very end, while the concluding verse in his farce *Budo Shālīker Ghāde Roān* is a model of smartness which has not yet lost its modern ring.

The earnestness of his workmanship and readiness to take pains, his practice of revising again and again works of approved merit, his hearty welcome of frank and judicious criticism, his brilliant promise no less than his wonderful achievement,—all combine to make him an exquisitely interesting object of study from this point of view.

The impetus given by him acted on other poets; it may be noticed, however, that Hem Chandra uses the rhyme scheme *a b b a* of *In Memoriam*, e.g.,

বুঝি না তোমাতে দেব ভব-লীলা-খেলা ;  
একপে কেন বা জীবে হাসাও কাঁদাও,

\* *Ibid*, p. 478.

কেন মার কেন কাট কি সাধ পূরাও,

—আচার বিচার কি যে কেন বা এ থেলা ?

( শিশুবিয়োগ, ২২০ পৃঃ, হেমচন্দ্র

গ্রন্থাবলী, বসুমতী-সংস্করণ )

Hem Chandra made extensive use of varieties of *tripadī* in the traditional way, and the hold of Sanskrit prosody was not altogether lost on him.

In considering the numerous metrical forms invented and used by poets from Bihari Lal to Satyendra Nath which defy enumeration, it cannot be claimed that all the innovations are due to English or western influence, but many—may be the majority—are. Bihari Lal stands unique in not only having experimented successfully with the existing verse machinery but also in having stimulated Rabindra Nath's metrical sense. Rabindra Nath was used at first to versifying in the *payār* form with fourteen syllables in each line ; but the metre of *Sārādāmangal*, specially of *Vangasundarī*, simply charmed him. The type of verse in which the alternate lines rhyme and are composed of 12 and 11 letters respectively, the metre of his *Patitā*, was thus his favourite in the early days of his apprenticeship to Poesy ; he was charmed with its rollicking movement “ as on a Bicycle : ”\*

সুঠাম শরীর পেলব লতিকা

আনত সুখমা কুসুম-ভরে ;

টাচর চিকুর নীরদ মালিকা

লুটায়ে পড়েছে ধরণী পরে ।

\* *Jivan-smriti*, p. 158. “একদা এই ছন্দটাই আমি বেশি করিয়া ব্যবহার করিতাম । ইহা যেন দুই পায়ে চলা নহে, ইহা যেন বাইসিকলে খাবমান হওয়ার মত ।”

English and Bengali tunes combined and mingled in the jingle of the songs in *Vālmīki-Pratibhā*, and in *Māyār Khelā*, Rabindra Nath's early compositions; Jyotirindra Nath had a hand in these songs, the words of which were set to the tune hit on by him, as has been related in his reminiscences published by Basanta Kumar Chatterji. The two great prosodists, or inventors of new measures, in modern Bengali have been Rabindra Nath Tagore and Satyendra Nath Datta. Tagore's genius has known no end of weaving out measure after measure to convey the subtle ideas and associations of his rich fund of poetry. But though much can be attributed in this respect to his genius which is a model to itself, it is impossible to forget his intimate acquaintance, at a very impressionable age, with English lyric poets whose words were indissolubly married to their metre. It may be claimed that these impressions made his views on prosody and practice of it very much pronounced. He had trained himself in the translation of western verse into Bengali; some from Victor Hugo, Shelley (*Lines written in Dejection near Naples*) and Mrs. Browning (*Sonnets from the Portuguese*, No. XXXIII). Many of these translated pieces may have been omitted from his selections, which excluded all poems composed prior to *Sandhyā-Sangī*<sup>†</sup> as appears from his prefatory note to *Kāvyagrantha* \* (1915).

As regards the other great metrist of the age, Satyendra Nath, he had for his models not only western measures but verses from all lands under

\* “সন্ধ্যাবন্দীতের পূর্ববর্তী আমার সমস্ত কবিতা আমার কাব্য-গ্রন্থাবলী হইতে বাদ দিয়াছি।—এইখান হইতেই আমার লেখা নিজের পথ ধরিয়াছে।”

the sun. He says in the opening\* verse affixed to his *Tirtha-salil* :—

আমার কণ্ঠে গাহিছে আজিকে জগতের যত কবি ।  
 আমার তুলিতে আঁকিছে তাদের সুখ দুঃখের ছবি ।  
 শত বিচিত্র সুর,  
 আজি একত্রে বিহরে হরষে অথও স্তমধুর !  
 আমার কণ্ঠে গাহিছেন ব্যাস, বাণ্মীকি, কালিদাস !  
 দাস্তে, হোমার, শেক্সপীয়ার, কণ্ঠে করিছে বাস !  
 গেটে, হুগো, বায়রণ,  
 হেঙজু, হাফেজ, শ্রীকো, অবৈয়ার, খুসহাল, টেনিসন্ ।  
 ওমার খৈয়াম আসিয়া মিলেছে, এসেছে ভল্টেয়ার ;  
 হায়েন এসেছে, শেলি, সাদি, কীট্‌স্, বার্ণস্, বেরাজ্জার ;  
 আরো যে এসেছে কত !  
 মোদের পদ্যবনে জগতের জুটেছে মধুব্রত !

The point of interest lies in the fact that he was not contented with translating merely the ideas of these poets, but also their verse forms ; as he says in his extremely brief preface to his *Tirtha-salil* in a rather apologetic way :—ক্ষেত্রবিশেষে অনুবাদের অনুবাদ—সকল স্থলে মূলের ছন্দ রাখিতে পারি নাই। “ Sometimes it is translation of a translation—I have not been able to preserve the metre of the original in all cases.”

This finds corroboration in the several renderings, *e.g.* :—

(a) ওরে কচি ! ওরে জড়সড় ! নতমুখ !

কত আতঙ্কে তুর তুর তোর বুক !

অত দ্রুত আর হবে না পলাতে

তুরিত চলি

মারিতে ধরিতে আমি যাবনারে লাঙল তুলি ।

( একটি মুষিকের প্রতি—তীর্থসলিল )

This is evidently modelled on Burns' metre :

“ Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie !

Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle !

I wad be lath to rin an' chase thee  
Wi' murd'ring pattle !”

(*To a Mouse*,—on turning her up  
in her nest with the plough)

(b) বন্দি তোমা আনন্দ মূরতি !  
পাখী তুমি কখনই নহ,  
স্বর্গে—কি বা তারি কাছে অতি ।  
ভরা প্রাণে ঢাল স্বপ্ন মোহ ;  
না শিখিরা, না ভাবিরা আহা,  
অজস্র গাহিছ অহরহ ।

( চাতকের প্রতি—তীর্থসলিল )

This is from the well-known lines to the Skylark by Shelley, and the metre is also modelled on the English poem :

“ Hail to thee, blithe spirit !

Bird thou never wert,  
That from Heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.”

Again—

(c) কেহ কি হয় অধোবদন,  
অকলঙ্ক দরিদ্রতায় ?

দৈত্য মোরা করি বরণ,  
ভীকু যে জন গণি না তায় ।

( নিষ্কলঙ্ক দারিদ্র্য—তীর্থসলিল )

The very well-known lines from Burns proclaiming the nobility of mere man stripped of his appendage have been translated in the nearest equivalent possible to his own metre.

“ Is there, for honest poverty,  
That hangs his head, and a' that?  
The coward slave, we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that.”

This is just the place to remark that Satyendra Nath also adopted the rhyming scheme, the result of Swinburne's improvements upon Omar Khayyam \* *a a b a*, which was Omar Khayyam's metre, was improved upon by Swinburne who added a ' *b* ' rhyme to ' *b*,' *e.g.*, *a a b a c c b c*.

Satyendra Nath invented new metres as in *Pāl-kir Gān*. He also utilised Sanskrit models, both well known and rare, and composed in the *Mālinī*, *Mandākrāntā*, *Ruchirā*, *Shārdūla-vikrīḍita* and many less known metres. His poems like *Simhal* composed after the ' Young Lochinvar ' ballad and *Dui Sur* both occurring in *Kuhu o Keku* show marks of western influence in the attempt to reproduce the effect of dactyl measure.

Two lines from each are given below by way of illustration :—

ওই সিঁধুর টিপ সিংহল দ্বীপ কাঞ্চনময় দেশ !

ওই চন্দন যার অঙ্গের বাস, তাপুল-বন কেশ ।

( সিংহল )

কোকিল—কালো কোকিল রচে সুরের ফুলে ফুলঝুরি,

বসন্তে সে ভুলায়ে আনে হাওয়ায় করি' মন চুরি !

( দুই সুর )

\* The reference is to Fitzgerald's English translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* and to the metre used in it.

The changes in metre have a significance ; they serve to point out that new metres are called for in order to convey new impressions, *e.g.*, songs in chorus (these are as old as Hem Chandra) like Dwijendra Lal's "*Bāṅga āmār jananī āmār*" and verses in tune with war marches as in Kazi Nazrul Islam's *Kāmāl Pāshā* were occasioned by a new national spirit and were at the same time, it is safe to note, inspired or influenced by English models.

#### IV. *Blank Verse.*

Far more remarkable and of much greater significance was the introduction of blank verse or verse without rhyme. This was the achievement of Michael Madhu Sudan. Trained in the school of western poets in general and English poets in particular, he thought that blank verse should be the medium to follow in attempts at writing verse ; at least it was so in his case. He was induced to make the first attempts half in jest, half in earnest, when in course of a chance conversation with Jatindra Mohan Tagore, a well-known patron of literature and a judicious critic, he insisted that until blank verse came to its help, Bengali literature would not be able to make much headway. When Jatindra Mohan declared it was doubtful whether verse without rhyme would be a success in the vernacular, specially when it had been a failure in French, Madhu Sudan boldly undertook to make it a success by writing a volume of poems in blank verse, Tagore offering to undertake its publication in that case. As a result we find him using the new medium first in his drama *Padmāvatī*, in two or three scenes, in the speeches of



Kali and Kanchuki, but this first attempt was not encouraging. A few days later he composed the first two cantos of *Tilottamā-sambhav* and it came as a surprise to his friends Jatindra Mohan and Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra. The book came out in 1860, the costs being borne by Jatindra Mohan as arranged. Many passages had got the benefit of his careful criticism and it will not be amiss to quote here, from one of his letters to Madhu Sudan, his views on blank verse at that time, as representing the notion of the educated Bengalis in general :

“ I should like very much to see Blank-verse gradually introduced in our dramatic literature. I am inclined to believe that at first it should be done with great caution and judgment. Where the sentiment is elevated or idea is poetical there only should short and smooth flowing passages in blank-verse be attempted, so that the audience may be beguiled into the belief that they are hearing the self-same prose to which they are accustomed,—only sweetened by a certain inherent music pleasing and agreeable to the ear. But care must be taken that they may, in the first instance, be not scared away by the rugged grandeur of this form of versification nor disgusted by the rounded periods replete with phrases, which are jargon to the untutored ears of many ; for that would make the thing at once unpopular and injure the cause for many years to come.”\* This criticism, there is reason to believe, was not altogether lost on the poet, as we find him alive to the need of embellishments like puns and alliterations in order to

\* *Māikel Madhu Sūdan Datter Jīvan-charit*, by Jogindra Nath Basu, 5th Edition, 1925, pp. 265-66.

lull the reader to music, that the novelty of blank verse might not attract notice and rouse hostility. We find him writing to his friend Raj Narayan Basu while asking for his opinion on *Padmāvatī*,—"I am of opinion that our drama should be in blank verse and not in prose, but the innovation must be brought about by degrees."\* The poet was a faithful student of the English poet Milton, and is not concerned when complaint is made about his hard style; for he says, "Good Blank Verse should be sonorous and the best writer of Blank Verse in English is the *toughest* of poets—I mean old John Milton!"† It was grandeur that he was seeking to effect, and after he had got on with his experiment even much better than he expected, he exclaimed,—“Is not Blank Verse in our language quite as grand as in any other?” His partiality for the new medium makes him exclaim: “What have I to do with rhyme?”‡—though he had already burst asunder the shackles of convention in rhyme, and the *Vrajāṅganā* was in the press. Nevertheless, he was asked by his friends to explain the system on which the new verse was constructed and he pointed to Milton specifically as his model and said, in course of a letter to Raj Narayan Basu:—"I am sure there is very little in the system to explain; our language as regards the doctrine of accent and quantity, is an 'apostate,' that is to say, it cares as much for them as I do for the blessings of the Family-Priest! If your friends know English, let them read the *Paradise Lost*, and they will find how the verse, in

\* *Ibid*, p. 317.

† *Ibid*, p. 310.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 329.

which the Bengali poetaster writes, is constructed. The fact is, my dear fellow, that the prevalence of Blank-verse in this country, is simply a question of time. Let your friends guide their voices by the pause (as in English Blank-verse) and they will soon swear that this is the noblest measure in the Language. My advice is Read, Read, Read. Teach your ears the new tune and then you will find out what it is.'\* He made it a success in his life-time from the point of view of appreciation, for the learned Pandit Vidyasagar and Rev. Long were both brought round to express their admiration for this wonderful medium which he brought into use.

Hem Chandra, though not equally enthusiastic with Michael Madhu Sudan, had tried the medium of blank verse in his epic *Vritra-samhār* but it is open to question if he can claim any superiority on that score. Hem Chandra did not take to the blank verse exclusively even in his epic; only his cantos 1, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 24,—13 in all out of the total 24 are written in that medium; a variety of metres is utilised in the composition of his epic, and the *payār* and the *tripadī* had not lost their charm for him.

Nabin Chandra also used blank verse, *e.g.*, in his *Raivatak*, but metrical skill appears as a distinct trait in his writings and like Hem Chandra he could not or did not dispense altogether with the music of similar sounds. Even in his *Raivatak* he did not keep faithful to the medium all through, but swerved aside and tried other measures which must have seemed to him more harmonious.

\* *Ibid*, pp. 320-21.

Before, however, sufficient time could elapse or intervene for the proper appreciation of Madhu Sudan's invented harmonies, Girish Chandra, an apt and serious student of the literature of both the east and the west, had felt the need of a suitable medium for emotional expression, and to him the chance reading of a few dedicatory lines to *Hutom Pyānchār Naksā* by Kali Prasanna Sinha seemed a veritable god-send. Taking the hint he moulded it to his own needs and used it for dramatic purpose. The change introduced was, however, looked upon with great disfavour probably for no better reason than its novelty, and sarcastically styled ' *Gairish chhanda* ' just as Madhu Sudan's epic was parodied in *Chhuchhundarīvadh-Kāvya*. The new feature of Girish Chandra's adaptation consisted in irregular line length to correspond to the conversational rhythm; while in some of the lines the syllables would run up to twelve or fourteen, in others they would not exceed half that number. This gave an air of reality and corresponded to the rapid changes in men's moods as in actual life. It is also necessary to observe that the jingle of similar and recurring sounds in the same line was a frequent characteristic. This modification of blank verse was used by Girish Chandra specially in his mythological plays and later adopted extensively by other dramatists as well.

Rabindra Nath Tagore's favourite metre is not what may be described accurately as blank verse, but rhyming lines which are run on or unstopped. This has been the case with many of his first rate poems like *Mānasa-sundarī* (1892), *Vasundharā* (1893), *Meghadūt* (1890), *Svarga haite vidāy*

(1895)—as we find in *Mānasī*, *Sonār Tarī*, *Chitrā*. In these the jingle of similar sounds is not altogether absent, but never prominent. For Tagore's blank verse, one has to go to *Chitrāngadā*, *Rājā o Rānī* and *Visarjan*.

### V. *Types of Verse.*

Coming now to the consideration of time-honoured divisions of verse forms, lyric and epic, reserving dramatic composition for a more detailed treatment from the point of view of western influence, we may note, at the outset, the inauguration of the lyric verse, practically speaking, with Michael Madhu Sudan, in this, as in many other things, a pioneer in a real sense of the word. The name of Iswar Chandra Gupta should not be forgotten in this connection; through his paper, *Samvād-Prabhākar*, he had already, before Madhu Sudan, begun to publish lyric verses for the enjoyment of the public. Songs and lyrics formed in older Bengali a portion only of some integral composition; but henceforth lyric verse was to be the common stock-in-trade of an aspirant after poetic fame. On purely moral topics and for the entertainment of children, moral poems were composed by Madhu Sudan as late as 1870 in the wake of Aesop's Fables, embodying some truth to be illustrated by means of fables, *e.g.*, *Ashva o Kuranga*. The parody as a distinct form in literature has been inspired by foreign models, and it has not yet received a permanent name in the vernacular, though now and then it is called *lālikā*,

(a) *The Sonnet.*

Of the many foreign forms sought to be introduced to the Bengali literature, the sonnet is the one which has succeeded most. In Michael Madhu Sudan's letter No. 37 addressed to his friend Raj Narayan Basu, the poet says : \* ' I want to introduce the sonnet into our language and, some mornings ago, made the following,' giving next his *Kavimātribhāshā* which has undergone some changes as we know it now. He predicted with remarkable foresight at that time that ' if cultivated by men of genius, our sonnet would in time rival the Italian,'—and in this he has proved a true prophet in his *Chaturdashpadī Kavītāvalī*, published after his main works, *Tilottamā-sambhav*, *Meḡhnādbadh*, *Vrajāṅganā* and *Vīrāṅganā*, had appeared; there are 102 sonnets, the second of which definitely acknowledges his indebtedness to Petrarch for this particular form. They prepared the way for further attempts in this direction, and Debendra Nath, Chitta Ranjan, Rabindra Nath have all woven into the form the innate grace of the language, enriching at the same time its wealth of expression and thought. There are four distinct elements to be considered in the sonnet,—the length of each line, the number of lines, the rhyme-scheme and the unity of thought implied by the name. In all but the last item, there have been various innovations, with a view to greater assimilation.

It is interesting to observe that Nabin Chandra made one curious attempt ' in the sonnet form ' as

\* *Ibid*, p. 477.

he called it, where some alternate lines were of the same length in the first twelve lines ; while in a regular sonnet, the lines are of equal length.

( সনেট )

ত্রিদিব জ্যোৎস্না দেবী মূর্তি ধরি,  
আজি কি ভূতলে খসি ?  
জ্যোৎস্না সাগরে জ্যোৎস্না ঢালিয়া  
শশি করতলে উদিল শশী  
পবিত্রতর ? কি যে পবিত্রতা,  
ত্রিদিব মাধুরী পড়িছে ঝরি  
সুধাংশু হইতে, সুধা অংশু যেন,  
পাপপূর্ণ ধরা পবিত্র করি ।  
নিদ্রাস্তে দেখিহু কক্ষ অন্ধকার  
আলোকিছে মূর্তি—মানবী নয় ।  
ভরিল হৃদয়, ভাসিল নয়নে  
আনন্দাশ্রু ; চিত্ত চন্দ্রিকাময় ।  
আলোকি বৈশাখী-জ্যোৎস্না-নিশি  
আলোকে আলোক গেল কি মিশি !

( গ্রন্থাবলী, বসুমতী-সাহিত্যমন্দির, চতুর্থ সংস্করণ, ২য় ভাগ,  
কবির উপহার, ১৫৩ পৃষ্ঠা )

In Rabindra Nath, there are many variations of the sonnet form to be found scattered here and there in his writings. There are seven couplets, each containing a distinct rhyme as in *Vairāgya* or *Devatār Vidāy (Chaitālī)* ; there are two quatrains, followed by three couplets as in *Punyer-hisāb* in the same book ; there is, again, one quatrain followed by five couplets as in his *Didi*. *Naivedya* contains as many as 77 sonnets all consisting of seven couplets

which, again, is the form adopted in some of the sonnets in his *Smaran*. But in that collection there are many fourteen-line poems where, however, each line consists of 18 morae, not 14, as in the conventional type. In his *Utsarga* the two varieties are used side by side,—both in seven couplets but some contain 14 syllables in each line while in others the number of syllables is 18. In his *Gītānjali*, there are many poems consisting of 14 lines, but the rhyme-scheme is irregular. It is noteworthy in this connection that in 1873, Raj Krishna Ray wrote and published the *Bangabhūshan*\* in fourteen-line poems and with Madhu Sudan for his model; and that in one of the early issues of the *Sāhitya* (Bengali year 1299) Saroj Kumari Devi attempted a sonnet-sequence, the series consisting of 24 sonnets on the several women's characters depicted by Bankim Chandra in his novels. All these go far to show that the sonnet form has become thoroughly assimilated in the literature.

### (b) *Intermediate Forms.*

How much has been effected in giving freedom to the verse-machinery will be evident on an examination of any anthology or verse collections in modern Bengali like the *Kārya Dīpālī*. No restrictions seem to have been imposed as regards length; and if we consider Rabindra Nath's and Rajani Kanta's epigrammatic verses side by side with the

\* 'মৃত কবির মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত মহাশয়ের বঙ্গভাষার প্রথম স্ট্রীচতুর্দশপদী কবিতার অনুকরণ করিয়া বঙ্গভাষা রচনা করিলাম।' বঙ্গভাষাণের বিজ্ঞাপন, ১লা পৌষ, ১২৮০।



former's *Ebār phirāo more*, we shall realise how far any implicit limit in the matter of length has been outgrown. Recognition had to be granted, therefore, to stanzas or sub-divisions of verses.

(c) *The Ballad.*

Of the many intermediate forms that have sprung up, the ballad or *gāthā* form at least deserves specific mention, in which we find a lyrical narrative, simple, and adapted for a simple audience. Swarna Kumari Devi was the first to write such ballads in Bengal, but it was Rabindra Nath who gave the form a wide currency in his *Kathā o Kāhinī*. It is not necessary to differentiate this form from that of the Mymensingh Ballads which are ballads only in name but are built really on a more ambitious design. This *gāthā* is also quite different from the *prākṛit* metre which went by that name, as may appear from any example, even 80 years ago.

The *gāthā* form, as it was called by the middle of the last century, may be illustrated by the following lines :

হইয়া মোহের দাসী,                      মিছে ধন অভিলাষী,  
 পরিহরি শয়ন ভোজন ।  
 এই আসে, এই আসে,                      পথ চেয়ে, এই আশে,  
 ভাবি মনে, নৃপতি নন্দন ॥ \*

It seems that, in the modernised form it refers to the kind of poetry rather than the metrical scheme.

(d) *Translations from Western Literature.*

Here we need but refer to translations in verse, of poems from western literature or their adaptations in Bengali, too numerous for exhaustive mention. The persistent work of Iswar Chandra Gupta in this direction has been already mentioned. He used to offer prizes for best translations of English poems into Bengali. By the middle of the Bengali year he would announce English poems which were to be so translated. Thus, an offer of a prize of Rs. 50 was declared for Gray's *Elegy*, another of Rs. 25 for Goldsmith's *Hermit*; both were won by "Mr. D—." In the issue of his paper for Baishakh 1, 1265 B.S., we find the names of Parnell's *Hermit*, Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, as translated into Bengali on the occasion. Such competitions were generally thrown open to students, and sometimes Muhammadan students would join, as, in the year noted, Afzal Hossain of Krishnagar missionary school won a prize for translating Parnell. It may be stated in passing that sometimes even the mode of English poems, distinct from their framework, was adopted, as in the very year referred to, season poems were composed after English models by "S. C. M." Another year we find Campbell's *Last Man*, Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, Pope's *Universal Prayer* similarly rendered. Later on we find Campbell's *Soldier's Dream*, and when the year comes round, Logan's *Ode to the Cuckoo*, Beattie's *Hermit*, etc., done into Bengali verse. "It is very necessary to keep up practice in translating English poems, and though it seems a little difficult at first because a translation cannot be good

unless you submit to others' mood and will, yet when there is success at last after practice, there is no end of delight.'\* Accordingly Iswar Chandra and succeeding editors of his paper, kept up exhorting the readers, year after year, to translate the best poems in English into Bengali. To name one individual poet only, Hem Chandra in his *Chhāyāmayī* took Dante for his model, in his *Jīvan-Sangīt* tried to translate Longfellow's *Psalm of Life*, his *Indrer Sudhāpān* was from Dryden's *Ode to Music* or *Alexander's Feast*, his *Madan-Pārijāt* from Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*, *Chātak-Pakshī* from Shelley's poem *To a Skylark*, *Nava-Varsha* from Tennyson's stanzas in the poem, *In Memoriam*. "Ring out the old, ring in the new." Most of the poems included in the *Abasar-sarojinī* (1879, 2nd Edition) by Raj Krishna Ray were translations of English poems. A curious work, published in 1876, purporting to be a translation of *Lalla Rookh* deserves mention. The title-page gives the following description.

Paradise and the Peri.

Translated into Bengali from Moore's

*Lalla Rookh*.

পরী ও স্বর্গ

লালা রুখ্য নামক প্রসিদ্ধ ইংরাজী কাব্য হইতে অনুবাদিত ।

\* The *Samvād-Prabhākar*, Baishakh, 1266 B.S.

ইংরাজী কবিতার অনুবাদ বিষয়ে অভ্যাস রাখা অত্যন্ত আবশ্যক, যদিও প্রথমত তাহা কিঞ্চিৎ কঠিন হয় বটে কারণ অগ্নের মনের ভাব ও অভিপ্রায়ের দাসত্ব স্বীকার না করিলে অনুবাদ উত্তম হয় না কিন্তু তাহাতে অভ্যাস জন্মিলে এবং তাহাতে কৃতকার্য হইতে পারিলে আত্মাদের সীমা থাকে না ইংরাজী উত্তমোত্তম কবিতা সকল বঙ্গভাষায় অনুবাদকরণে বিশেষরূপেই মনোযোগি হইবেন, তাহা কদাচ তাচ্ছল্য করিবেন না ।

The work is dated 1876, and is all in *tripadī* metre, of which the following may well serve as a specimen :—

বসিয়া বিবাদভরে,                      কপোল বিতাসি করে,  
একদা প্রত্যাষে এক পরী  
ছিল স্বর্ণপুরী দ্বারে,                      সেই নিত্য স্মৃথাগারে  
সতৃষ্ণ নয়নে লক্ষ্য করি ।

In the 1st Baishakh issue of the *Samvād-Prabhākar*, 1268 B.S., we find Kali Prasanna Sinha announcing a reward of a hundred rupees for translation of Moore's poem into Bengali. We cannot say if the version referred to above secured it.\*

Rabindra Nath himself translated many lyrics from Victor Hugo among the French, and Shelley, Mrs. Browning, Moore, Marston, Webster, Aubrey de Vere, Ernest Myers among the English. But the greatest translator of poems from other literatures into Bengali has been Satyendra Nath, whose *Tīrtha-salil* and *Tīrtha-renu* are monuments of industry, in which the literary element has not been ignored or crushed. He has travelled east, west, north, south, not confining himself to any particular country, and, wherever he has come across any literary gem worth acceptance, has not spared time and energy in adorning his native literature with it.

\* There was another version of the English poem, the *Menakā* by Adhar Lal Sen, reviewed in the *Bhārati o Bālak*, Agrabayan, 1284 B.S. in the following words :

“ ইহা মুরের প্যাড়াডাইঙ এও দি পেরীর স্বাধীন অমুবাদ যাত্র । ”

Adhar Lal was the author of at least three other poems—*Lalitā-sundarī*, *Nalinī* and *Kusumkānan*—and he was a disciple of the English poet Byron.

Thus his services to the lyric verse of Bengal have been of a unique character and have placed him apart from the other poets in the country.\*

(e) *The Epic Form.*

In discussing the changes in the epic form brought about by western influence, it is worth our while to set forth clearly the implications of the new form. It depends no doubt on a dignified diction and elevated material but is also considerably associated with the intent or purpose of them, as in other forms. It is the want of this epic intent or design that, in English literature, prevents Scott and Byron from claiming any renown in the field of epic poetry. As to the characteristics of epics, if there were any, prior to the period of western influence, it is necessary to distinguish between allied Indian compositions, not merely Bengali—to differentiate the *Purāns*, the *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat*, the Sanskrit Mahakavyas, *Mangal gāns* in Bengali literature, and point out their characteristics. The *Purāns* stand furthest apart from the Bengali epics of this new era, approaching as they do more or less the ideal purpose of history and there is scarcely any

\* Among other translators of English verses may be mentioned the authoress of the *Vanalatā* (1880) whose work included renderings from Wordsworth's *Cuckoo*, Byron's *Euthanasia* and Cowper's *My Mary*. It would be interesting to speculate regarding the authorship of many exquisite poetic effusions, translations from Lowell, Kent and others, that were published in the *Sāadhanā* of those days.

continued literary flavour in them.\* It is precisely the predominance of this literary flavour which distinguishes the *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat*, but the too close similarity of these two books to the *Purāns* in point of inordinate length and style of narrative, generally speaking, marks them as different from the Sanskrit Mahakavyas. These were, again, a far way off from the *Mangal gāns*, being characterised by certain definite traits as laid down in authoritative books on poetics like the *Sāhitya-darpana*. In the *Mangal gāns* in Bengali literature which belong to mediæval times and reveal a type that grew out of folk literature and never completely transcended it, there is the narrative element all right but the purpose is religious, not literary, and simplicity clogs the wheels of poetic imagination.

The study of European epics presented the Bengali writer with a new model which he tried to copy in his language. Some of these epics were taught in the schools in selections, while others made their way to those who were enamoured of the new studies. It is not surprising, therefore, that attempts began to be made at translations and adaptations of the strange models. The *Iliad* had been translated in *payār* verse by Ananda Chandra Mukhopadhyay in 1863.

\* The *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat* have been rightly described as forming a bridge between the *Purān* literature and literature proper in an excellent discourse on the subject in the *Girish-smriti* or *Reminiscences of Girish Chandra*, by Kumud Bandhu Sen, which appeared in the *Bangabānī*.

MICHAEL MADHU SUDAN DATTA.

The name of Michael Madhu Sudan is the most prominent in the field of epic poetry as in so many other things. He at first took up the story of Tilottama and worked it into what he called "the first Blank-verse epic in the language." Though it was apparent that the book was a departure and that it was a mosaic work, the materials having been freely taken from Keats, Shelley, Milton and Kalidas, it was difficult to apportion the various elements, for the harmonising work of the poet had made it a homogeneous creation. He himself had no illusions about it, knowing quite well that it was merely an experiment; and on being told that it could not be a really heroic poem by reason of the erotic nature of the allusions, etc., he good-naturedly replied to his critical friend, "You must not, my dear fellow, judge of the work as a regular 'Heroic Poem.' I never meant it as such. It is a story, a tale rather heroically told." He was full of zeal at the time for trying epic poems time and again, and the friendly criticism that he received did him good. The next topic which he took up was more suitable for the purpose of an epic on account of its national interest. The fight between Ram and Ravan would be appreciated by the people, would have a dignity of its own and would provide ample opportunities for developing the heroic sentiment. Raj Narayan Basu counselled him to choose some other subject for his *magnum opus*; and suggested the 'Conquest of Ceylon' for a topic,\* perhaps because

\* It is interesting to note that a *Simhal-Vijay-Kāvya* was published by a "poet," Shiyama Charan Srimani; the book was reviewed in the *Madhyastha*, Chaitra, 1281.

the episode of Ram was not historical enough for him nor could he (as he supposed) expect the Bengali nation to take an interest in non-Bengali subjects. This appears from his words to Madhu Sudan, on giving him a detailed scheme of the suggested epic,—“ An epic poem like the one suggested above is much required to infuse patriotic zeal and a warlike spirit into the breasts of our degenerate countrymen. It is true that a hundred far more powerful agencies are required to bring about that mighty change, but....” The poet had no objection to the scheme, but meanwhile he had warmed himself up to the product of his imagination and would not let Indrajit go. He wrote by way of reply : “ The subject you propose for a national epic is good—very good indeed. But I don’t think I have as yet acquired a sufficient mastery over the ‘ Art of Poetry ’ to do it justice. So you must wait a few years more. In the meantime, I am going to celebrate the death of my favourite Indrajit. Do not be frightened, my dear fellow, I won’t trouble my readers with *vīra ras*. Let me write a few Epiclings and thus acquire a *pucca* fist.”\* His letters quoted in his biography throw a good deal of light on his plans of composition, as he talks frankly to his friends on his works, projected or executed. From them we learn that it was never his intention to borrow stories from foreign lands but that he wanted to acquire the mode of composition from Greece. “ I shall not borrow Greek stories but write, rather try to write, as a Greek would have

\* His biography by Jogindra Nath Basu, 5th Edition, p. 313.



done.”\* There are numerous indications as to his “sources,” which he has himself given; e.g., the opening lines কোন্ দেব মোহের শৃঙ্খলে etc., of *Meghnadbadh*, Canto II, are taken or adapted from Cowper’s Translation of Homer’s *Iliad* which, he takes care to add, had influenced Milton’s line—“Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?” Canto II was, on his own admission, taken from *Iliad*, XIV, from Juno’s visit to Jupiter on Mount Ida.† In the same canto, the image of Rati is cast in the mould of Aphrodite, Kama or Cupid of Somnus. Later in the book, the character of Pramila may have been constructed after Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Bk. XVI; Indrajit’s and Pramila’s rise from sleep, after the similar experience of Adam and Eve in the *Paradise Lost*, Book V; Indrajit’s slaughter may have been based on Homer who never represents any respectable Greek chief slain in fair fight by a Trojan, the author’s sympathies being reversed in this case; Canto VIII, however, is based on *Aenead*, as the poet declares in a friendly epistle to Raj Narayan Basu: “Mr. Ram is to be conducted through Hell to his father, Dasaratha, like another Aeneas.”

But more important than these interesting “sources,” is the confession of the poet that he conformed to Milton more than to Homer. The partiality for the English poet appears again and again

\* *Ibid*, p. 327.

† “As a reader of the Homeric Epos, you will, no doubt, be reminded of the Fourteenth *Iliad*, and I am not ashamed to say that I have intentionally imitated it—Juno’s visit to Jupiter on Mount Ida.” *Ibid*, p. 473.

in his letters. Speaking of his *Meghnādbadh*, he says, "The poem is rising into splendid popularity. Some say it is better than Milton—but that is all bosh—nothing can be better than Milton; many say it licks Kalidas; I have no objection to that. I don't think it is impossible to equal Virgil, and Tasso. Though glorious, still, they are mortal poets; *Milton is divine*."\* Again, he says, and with evident enthusiasm for the master he followed,—"Homer is nothing but battles. I have, like Milton, only one."† When he took up his work of *Meghnādbadh*, he intended at first to make only "a heroic fragment" of it, as at first he declared his intention of finishing it "in five books."‡ In the next letter, he said he would extend it to nine Sargas; while, in another still, he expressed his idea of lengthening it to ten books and "making it as completely an epic as he could."§ This idea of length, however mechanical it might be, had something then to do with his idea of an epic. .

It would be interesting to speculate whether he would have turned again to the writing of epics, if, fortunately for Bengali literature, fate would have spared him to serve the Native Muse. What evidence the letters afford is indecisive and insufficient for coming to any definite conclusion. Thus, he says in one of his letters, he was going to bid adieu to Heroic Poetry after *Meghnād* and to take to the composition of lyrical poems, for a fresh attempt would be in the nature of a repetition. He declares,

\* *Ibid*, p. 480.

† *Ibid*, p. 487.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 330.

§ *Ibid*, pp. 476-7.

“ I shall never again attempt anything in the heroic line.”\* But perhaps the idea of sinking into a writer of occasional sonnets and lyrics frightened him, for later he writes to Raj Narayan Basu : “ Give me the সিংহল,—old boy. I like a subject with oceanic and mountain scenery, with sea-voyages, battles and love-adventures. It gives a fellow’s invention such a wide scope.”†

Though this brilliant poet had been forestalled by fate from continuing his efforts, he had revealed the powers that were latent in the literature. There was no publication in the Bengali language which could show such a mind, so gigantic, so excellently moulded by the sages of the east and the west co-operating together. The greatest poet of Bengal was recognised to be no servile imitator ; on the contrary it was he round whom literary aspirants crowded in order to prove apt pupils in producing works of a like pattern, but with one or two glorious exceptions failed in their endeavour.

#### RANGALAL.

One of the literary friends of Madhu Sudan was Rangalal (1826-87) who did not share with him his reverence for Milton, a fact which Michael records again and again in his letters. One of the reasons which prompted him to compose poems was the impulse, which he felt, to kindle patriotism in his countrymen. Padmini-Upākhyān, composed (and published in 1858) to support a statement he had

\* *Ibid*, p. 435.

† *Ibid*, p. 494.

made in a paper read on May 13, 1852, at the Bethune Society (subsequently circulated as a pamphlet, *Defence of Bengali Poetry*) against the extreme disparagement of Bengali Poetry and the doubt often felt about the possibility of poetic achievement for a nation dependent so long like the Bengalis, was based on an episode taken from Tod's Rajasthan. The author admitted in the preface that this *abhinava* (new) Kavya was based on an episode taken, not from the old Purans, but from modern Rajput history because, in the first instance, the former source was too well-known, many had got the stories by heart, and secondly because it was desirable to feed the educated young men of the day (অধুনাতন কৃতবিত্ত যুবক) with stories from modern history in which the Rajputs, both men and women, had given so glorious an account of themselves. What was more, he explained that he had been himself a loving and devoted student of English verse, and thus he had for a long while been experimenting on verses in that mould :—

“ I have studied English poetry considerably most of all, and it has been long my practice to compose Bengali verse in that pure mould. I began to publish such verse in Bengali newspapers when I was 14 or 15. . . . The present poem has drawn, here and there, upon the ideas of many English poems. . . . The more Bengali poems will be composed in the pure English fashion, the more will shameless and ugly poems vanish from our view and the fewer their admirers will also grow.”

“ আমি সৰ্ব্বাপেক্ষা ইংলণ্ডীয় কবিতার সমধিক পর্যালোচনা করিয়াছি এবং সেই বিশুদ্ধ প্রণালীতে বঙ্গীয় কবিতা রচনা করা আমার বহুদিনের

অভ্যাস। বাঙ্গালা সমাচার পত্রপুঞ্জ আদি চতুর্দশ বা পঞ্চদশ বর্ষ বয়সে উক্ত প্রকার পণ্ড প্রকটন করিতে আরম্ভ করি।.....উপস্থিত কাব্যের স্থানে স্থানে অনেকানেক ইংলণ্ডীয় কবিতার আকর্ষণ আছে।... ইংলণ্ডীয় বিদ্বৎ প্রণালীতে যত বঙ্গীয় কাব্য বিরচিত হইবে, ততই ব্রীড়াশুভ কদর্য্য-কবিতা-কলাপ অন্তর্ধান করিতে থাকিবে এবং তত্তাবতের প্রেমিক-দলেরও সংখ্যা হ্রাস হইয়া আসিবে।”

In his next poem, Karmadevī (1862), there was a Brahmin Poet who narrated the story to a thoughtful traveller. He began by praising Padmini, and passed on to the story of an equally virtuous lady, Karmadevi. The initial lines seem to be based on some western poet,—though the harp is silent, the music still continues. Scott's device was evidently before him.

This is followed by Shūra-sundarī (1868), in four cantos like the preceding work, while *Padminī-upākhyān* is not divided into cantos; the length is suggestive. It has a benedictory portion or Mangalācharan, to the Goddess of Poesy (কবিতা-শক্তির প্রতি), and this seems to be due to western influence. Border-raids, tournaments, a knight's visit to his lady-love, clan organisation, the feudal system in most of its aspects—all these characteristics show that these poems of Rangalal approach closer to the epic episodes of Scott and Byron, their heroic verse tales, in atmosphere, purpose, style and length than to genuine full-fledged western epics. It is but proper in this connection to point out that they possess more human interest as contrasted with the divine personages who figure in Michael Madhu Sudan's epic. He translated

*Kumār-sambhava* but that was practically at the fag end of his poetic career, in 1872. His verse is, however, always characterised by a tendency to alliteration and the following line from his *Shūra-sundarī* is typical of the eastern element in him :

दिल्लीर दोर्द्धिगु दर्प दीपु दश दिशि.

He is, like his contemporaries, made up of eastern and western traits so far as poetic forms go.

HEM CHANDRA.

*Vritra-samhār* (the first part of which came out in 1875) conforms more closely to the form of the western epics in point of length in which it surpasses all previous attempts. Its diction, terse and sombre, is conducive to the solemn atmosphere intended by the author and proper for the epic. But the human interest is slight and the sacrifice of Dadhichi, however laudable for its moral idea, cannot stand comparison with the story of Ram in point of popularity. The close modelling of the first canto on Milton's *Paradise Lost* (council of the fallen angels in the Pandemonium), the address to the Goddess Saraswati in the opening lines of the twelfth canto after Milton's and Michael's manner, the adoption, in the thirteenth canto, of the Indianised version of the Greek legend 'apple of discord' as in Madhu Sudan's *Padmāvatī*, the carrying away of Sachi by force as described after the Sophronia incident in Tasso, the idealisation of Niyatī or Fate as a distinct goddess whom Indra seeks to propitiate—are all more or less signs of western influence in Hem Chandra.

The author was praised by a contemporary critic for such influences, because that was the way, he felt, for improving Bengali literature.\*

NABIN CHANDRA.

Nabin Chandra's Palāshīr Yuddha (1875) is not an epic, properly speaking, it is more closely allied to the verse tales of Scott, or romances in verse. Among other things, it is not up to the mark in respect of size, composed as it is in five cantos only. The resemblance to Julius Caesar in the matter of ghosts appearing before Siraj-ud-daulah before the fight is striking no doubt, but neither that nor the faint similarity of the first canto to the council of rebel angels in the Paradise Lost redeems the poem sufficiently to be considered as an epic. Nabin Chandra's claim to be considered an epic poet stands on a more solid basis; on the trilogy or epic cycle of Raivatak, Kurukshetra and Prabhās which describes the career of Krishna systematically, from youth to the end, the philosophical idea being present and explained throughout. The national idea, or rather the idea of national degradation, its cause and cure in the light of historical facts, has been brought out and discussed in detail, and the

\* Cp. Hem Chandra's own admission in his preface to the *Vritra-samhār*, Part I, as pointed out in the *Bangadarshan*, 1281 B.S. :—

“বালাবধি আমি ইংরাজিভাষা অভ্যাস করিয়া আসিতেছি এবং সংস্কৃত ভাষা অবগত নহি, হতরাং এই পুস্তকের অনেক স্থানে যে ইংরাজি-গ্রন্থকারদিগের ভাবসঙ্কলন এবং সংস্কৃত ভাষার অনভিজ্ঞতা দোষ লক্ষিত হইবে তাহা বিচিত্র নহে।”

“I have been studying English from my boyhood and do not know Sanskrit; so it is not strange that many passages in the book will show compilation of ideas from English authors and ignorance of Sanskrit.”

magnitude of the epic cycle is as great as could be desired. An event of the utmost importance forms the background and lends seriousness to the composition—the harmonising blend of the Aryan and the Non-Aryan, or better, the Brahmanic and the Dravidian elements in the make-up of Indian culture. Nabin Chandra has written other long poems, but they, like his *Palāśhīr Yuddha*, are not epics in any sense.

### *Later Epics.*

The epic vein was worked by many writers who tried to walk in the footsteps of Madhu Sudan, Hem Chandra and Nabin Chandra; hardly any of them rises over mediocrity, and it is not necessary to point out particular ‘epic poets.’ But the *Vir-Kumar Badh* of Mankumari Basu and *Helenā* of Ananda Chandra Mitra deserve special mention; both were much appreciated in their day. The curious student may read, as a specimen of the crop of ephemeral ‘epics,’ the *Mahāmogal Kāvya*, the third part of which appeared in 1884 and was called ‘Jaysingha Parva.’ Various measures are used in the poem; almost all of them are antiquated.

In more recent times, however, Jogindra Nath who had already earned his reputation as the writer of the only remarkable biography in Bengali literature again took up the epic form, and in his *Shivāji* and *Prithvīrāj* sought to describe and analyse the various forces which hastened the disintegration of India, and contributed to its fall before foreign aggressors. He pointed to national moral weaken-



ing as responsible for the present state of long-continued dependence, concluding with the words :

হিন্দুর দুর্গতি-মূলে দুর্দশিতি হিন্দুর,  
প্রায়শ্চিত্ত অস্তে দুঃখ, দৈন্ত হবে দূর ।

“ The Hindus’ degeneracy is at the basis of his distress ; after penance, his sorrows and poverty will go away.”

The direct influence of western epics in point of form seems to be absent here, in these latest creations in epic form. But it should be remembered that in such matters, the greatest importance attaches to the pioneer work, the later influences becoming more and more attenuated. The part played by Madhu Sudan could not be repeated again and again, and the pattern or frame introduced by him formed the common heritage of all later poets.

## VI. Conclusion.

We have confined ourselves so long to the western influence in Bengali verse forms ; we have taken up at first diction and versification \* for discussion from our point of view, and then proceeded to examine Bengali lyrics and epics as these have been affected more or less by western models, so far as form is concerned. Influence in the form of the drama will be considered in the next chapter.

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\* It is curious that the craze for western fashions in versification went so far that in a book of poems, *Binodmālā Gitikāvya* (1878) by Harish Chandra Neogi, every line began as in English poetry with a “ capital ” letter ! The poems were, of course, in the vein of Byron’s *Isles of Greece*, and of Gray and Goldsmith.

## CHAPTER VI

### Influence on Bengali Drama

#### *I. Introductory :*

#### *Drama and its Constituents.*

The stage is in these days one of the chief means of amusement in Bengal and an educated Bengali, among other things, is naturally expected to take some interest in the dramatic works of distinguished Bengali writers and their representation on the boards of recognised national theatres. This is by no means exclusively confined to the educated section of the community, for, going to the play is daily gaining more and more recognition in all classes of society. The actor's profession, so long openly cried down, now wins respect and can count converts in the educated *bhadralog* class. The stigma and the stain which would stick to the best of actors two generations ago have been washed away by the current of new ideas—ideas that have made their way into the creeks and corners of the nation. An actor of established repute would gain ovations now instead of being looked at askance by the makers of fashion and the conservative section of the people. Special periodicals have been started solely for the improvement of the drama and the stage has begun to constitute itself an indispensable item to which a journal of general character with pretensions to culture must direct its attention. A powerful weapon in the hands of the propagandist, its services are enlisted in the cause of philanthropy and

patriotism, and it has been found on experience to be a powerful and influential ally. To the theatres located in Calcutta—and these are, by tacit consent, of the best material available—there are feeder institutions in the district towns, the idea having penetrated even into villages. The absence of a dramatic club would indeed be disastrous to the dignity and prestige of any self-respecting locality. Neither the ravages of malaria, nor a series of economic distress, nor the cares and anxieties of a life bounded in its avenues of energy and pleasure, have succeeded altogether in repressing the mind of Young Bengal and keeping it away from the direct enjoyment of staging or witnessing popular plays. Such has been the wonderful spread of the drama, admittedly a new form, wonderful because of the extent of its influence, which again is due in a great measure to its simultaneous and two-fold appeal to the ear and the eye. It will not be amiss, therefore, to take the western impress on the Bengali Drama as a fair index of western influence in Bengali literature and we shall, on analysing the form of the drama, proceed to examine how far this western influence is writ large over the course of its growth and development.

The drama is a compound of many ingredients, a resultant of many forces ; the language used must be of a peculiar kind ; it is intended as a representation of actual life and conditions of life, and the language is bound to take note of that. The principles of Sanskrit dramaturgy were very thorough and explicit on this point, and prescribed definite dialects for different classes or types of persons. The presence of a variety of *prākṛits* often proves a

stumbling block in the way of appreciation of many students and lovers of the Sanskrit Drama. In English literature or, for that matter, in European literature it is difficult to come across a practice, equally thorough, though all dramatists are no doubt alive to the need, and try to differentiate the speeches somehow or other. Anyway, the language to be used is one of the factors that count. Prose and verse are both utilised for dramatic purposes, to impart a variety and to bring out the meaning intended to better advantage. Songs find a place on account of their appeal to imagination, specially in times of excitement, to relieve the mind of the stress under which it works. Next to vocal expression, we have to deal with agents or persons who represent it on the stage, in other words, actors and actresses. Plays owe a good deal to them; it follows as a matter of course that in framing critical theories plays are composed with a view to, in some instances, the actors and actresses and undergo certain changes in making themselves adapted to their capacities. Their temperament, physical appearance and other personal elements have all their share in presenting a particular drama. The audience are also a force to consider and count, —for the exhibition of skill is designed for their enjoyment, 'for catering to their pleasure,' as the prologues of Sanskrit plays are never weary of repeating. No doubt this might be deplored as acting as a check on the dramatists' powers, and powerful writers like Bhababhuti might declare their indifference to the popular appraisal of their merit, but it may be remarked at the same time that the resultant discipline is wholesome, that a careful consideration

of the necessity of making an impression on the minds of others by means of objective shows where men move and talk and act as in life need not mean "playing to the gallery." Then, again, there are painted scenes and dramatic devices. The drama appeals not only to the ear but—and here constitutes its main appeal—also to the eye, and the scenic beauty which stimulates the imagination of the audience comes up for its due praise or censure in the make-up of the whole. For convenience and help to the understanding, the play itself is divided into a number of acts with sub-divisions, it may be, which regulate its movement till the *denouement* is complete and the thread is untwisted. Again, there are directions not meant for the audience but for helping the actors and actresses, motioning their entrance, exit, etc. Last, but not least, we have the different types of plays—comedies intended mainly to amuse, tragedies designed to excite pity for the distressed and rouse sympathy for people in extreme sorrow, farces for fun, and operas composed primarily to amuse by songs and dances and held together by the slenderest of plots. In tracing western influence in the form of the Bengali drama, it is necessary to approach the subject with a clear understanding of the various topics connected with it as mentioned above, in order to measure or appreciate the extent of innovation that exists in these particulars.

## II. *Pre-British Bengali Drama.*

It is not very difficult to suggest probable indigenous sources which might have led in time

to the evolution of the Bengali Drama. We need not, in our present study, linger on the days long past, when Bengali had not emerged as a vernacular speech, had not differentiated itself from the *prākṛit* form, or earlier still, take our stand on Bharata's *Nāṭya-Shāstra* and dwell on the principles of dramaturgy that we might find enunciated there. Coming nearer to our times, we find, during the Muhammadan rule in the province, dramatic performances could not flourish because these as objective shows with abundant music and dancing jarred against the religious doctrines they held so dear. But a few devotional plays, in the times of Sri Chaitanya and after, stand out by themselves. The great saint himself organised a play on Sri Krishna; his distinguished devotee, Rupa Goswami, distinguished alike by his religious passion and intellectual powers, composed *Vidagdha-Mādhava* and *Lalita-Mādhava*, and Kavi Karnapura wrote *Chaitanya-Chandrodaya*; we read also in the *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛita* how some disciples were requested to look over plays written by others. *Jagannāth-Vallabha* by a member of the same group might come up here for mention, but its author Rai Ramananda was, we know, not a Bengali. It has to be considered that these works were written in Sanskrit, not in the vernacular, and that they had no dramatic purpose in view, their object being more or less to bring out the figure of Krishna prominently, just as he was viewed by the Vaishnavs; but they are important, for they served to indicate the lines which the original and similar literary type of the nation—as in the *Yatras*—was to follow. The religious topic persisted; all the *Yatras* had

come to mean Krishna Yatras which find an echo in the dictum—"There is no song without Kanu." Our Yatra literature has not been carefully and properly studied, but its nature has been indicated in *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century* by Prof. S. K. De (pp. 442-454). Though its beginnings are enveloped still in obscurity, the crude makeshifts did their best in vividly representing the story, and the Yatras served to please the public by their operative and melodramatic elements and their religious theme, but they had little or no influence on the Bengali stage at least as far as the pioneers are concerned, and Ram Narayan Tarkaratna's remarks prefixed to his *Ratnāvalī* corroborate this statement. Just at the beginning of the eighteenth century there was some sort of literary transmission from Bengal to Nepal by which similar works were sent over to Nepal or carried there by Bengali scholars; this appears from the Bengali dramas in Nepal belonging to the period, a period in which the Yatras in Bengal also existed, and written in some corrupt form or admixture of Bengali. These have been made accessible to the public through *Nepāle Bāngālā Nātak* (1324 B.S.), published by the Bangiya Sahitya-Parishat, consisting of four plays, the first three of which have been shown to be more or less approximate to the standard Bengali of those days. In these plays prose finds no place, there are regular *nāndīs* or Sanskritic prologues, the *Sūtradhār* puts in an appearance and describes the season or the country; and the number of acts is irregular, running up to 23 in one (*Mahābhārāt* by Krishna Das). It may be remarked in this context that one of these plays was on the love affair of

Vidya and Sundar and thus was, to a certain extent, a departure from the conventional standard. Apart from these curious specimens, the Yatras in Bengal were a popular means of amusement, and while on the subject it will not be altogether irrelevant to quote the following passage from the *Englishman*, May 9, 1876 :

“ The rude jatras chanted at religious festivals in great men’s houses have always been a favourite form of entertainment among the Hindu population of the towns, though they are rather epic than dramatic in character. But barring such imperfect relics of a past, or dim adumbrations of a future drama, and barring certain more ambitious efforts in the direction of opera at Lucknow, the theatre, in the proper sense of the term, had, till lately, practically no existence on this side of India. Even at present it is only the select few who can be supposed to take a deep interest in its prospects ; and, outside Calcutta, it has nowhere attained the dignity, or indignity, of a popular spectacle.”

Though evidently this statement bristles with inaccuracies, the main proposition stands—that the theatre as such was the product of the mid-nineteenth century.

An interesting specimen of the indigenous type survives in the appendix to Prof. Wilson’s series of *The Theatre of the Hindus*, containing short accounts of different dramas of Hindu workmanship. In that appendix we come across an abstract of the play *Chitra-Yajna* which concludes with these comments by the learned professor, “ This heterogenous composition is the work of a Pandit of Nadiya,



Vaidyanatha Vachaspati, Bhattacharyya, and was composed for the festival of Gobinda, by desire of Iswara Chandra, the Raja of Nadiya, about twenty or thirty years ago. It is so far valuable, as conveying a notion of the sort of attempts at dramatic composition made by the present race of Hindus in Bengal. The Yatras or Jatras, which are occasionally represented in the Bengali Language, follow the plan of the *Chitra-Yajna* with still less pretensions to a literary character. They are precisely, the *improvista Commedia* of the Italians, the business alone being sketched by the author, and the whole of the dialogue supplied by the actors. The dialogue is diversified by songs which are written and learnt by heart. Some improvements however have been made of late years, in the representation of the performance : the details of the story are more faithfully and minutely followed, and part of the dialogue is composed and taught by the author to the actors."

Prof. Wilson's remarks, which, by the way, suggest or throw open an interesting question of comparative literature, refer to a period about the close of the eighteenth century and a type of literary dramas influenced more or less by the popular Yatra literature ; but meanwhile, the European model had presented itself in Calcutta and engaged the attention of the cultured public.

### III. *Early British Period : 1757-1796.*

With the prominence of Calcutta as a chief or central resort of the European traders on this side of India, the question of amusement came to

the front and pressed for solution. In the intervals of business and money-making, the British residents provided for their own recreation by means of concerts, balls and suppers towards the fifties of the eighteenth century. In the years following the battle of Plassey which witnessed the foundation of their power on a firm footing, we find them exploring other avenues of amusement. The first British play-house, situated probably just opposite to the present site of St. Andrew's Church, east of the junction of Lali Bazar Street and Mission Row, which had catered to the English before the battle of Plassey, could also have practically no influence on the origin of the Bengali stage. More directly associated with that was the Calcutta Theatre (1776-1808), founded in 1776, shortly after Halhed's important work on Bengali Grammar, and this theatre was located near the present junction of Clive Street and Lyons' Range. The venture was not a success from the financial point of view; however, we learn that the gates were opened at 8 p.m., that the gate-keepers were Europeans and that only male actors were employed. The celebrated English actor, David Garrick, sent down one Mr. Messinck to work here as the Stage manager and this might be taken as a bond strengthening the tie of the Calcutta Stage with the tradition of London. Among the plays that were staged we come across *She would and she would not*, *High Life Below Stairs*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*. *The School for Scandal* was staged on the 4th and the 11th April, 1780, when it was still fresh. Some time about 1787, a theatre was started by Mrs. Bristow, who

was an excellent actress herself, and who introduced actresses for the first time in the history of the Calcutta stage to represent female rôles; much was expected of her, but unfortunately for the evolution of the theatre here, with her return to England in 1790 her histrionic activities in the metropolis of Bengal came to a natural close.\*

This is the place to record the appearance of the first Bengali drama staged, and it is a noteworthy fact that it was wholly due to a Russian adventurer, Gerasim Lebedeff, whose was a romantic career with many and varied phases.† A peasant born, he rose to take part in foreign office work, came to Madras in 1785 as a bandmaster, then to Calcutta in 1787, and went over to England in 1801. He had some pretensions to Hindustani of which “mixed language” he composed a Grammar published in London in 1801. Lebedeff set up at 25, Dom-Tolla, a theatre—the Bengali Theatre, but popularly known and remembered as the New Theatre—for the entertainment of the Bengali citizens of Calcutta in 1795, and, with the assistance of a linguist, ‘Golucknat-dash,’ he translated into Bengali an English comedy named *Disguise*, and a farce *Love is the Best Doctor*. The Bengali version of the comedy, *Chhadmavesh* (?), was staged for the first time on the 27th November, 1795 and again on the 21st March, 1796. It was a noteworthy

\* Busteed's *Old Calcutta* : p. 138, n.

† See *Vāsanti*, Jaishtha, 1328; *Dictionary of Indian Biography* by C. E. Buckland, C.I.E.; *Calcutta Review*, October and November, 1923. The Early History of the Bengali Theatre. *Modern Review*, October-December, 1931.

feature about the presentation that everything was in Indian fashion—the stage, the arrangements for the seats of the audience, vocal and instrumental music, though European instrumental music was not altogether excluded. Passages of Bharat Chandra were set to music for the entertainment of the public. All that we know of the plays is that they were taken up to suit the taste of the Indians who “preferred mimicry and drollery to plain grave solid sense, however purely expressed”—as the Russian pioneer phrased it. The translation got the benefit of revision by many “learned Pundits,” and with the help of ‘Golucknat-dash,’ the linguist, actors of both sexes were recruited from the Indian section of the people; it was a great innovation as this was the first time when actresses appeared in women’s rôle on the Bengali stage. Sir John Shore, the Governor-General, granted him a regular licence without the least hesitation. The play was immensely popular; and on the first occasion, the Visitors’ Tickets, Sicca Rs. 4 for Galleries and Sicca Rs. 8 for Boxes and Pit, were all sold out, and the affair was a success from the financial point of view. The subscription for the second night, the 21st March, 1796, was one gold mohar per ticket. But due to some inexplicable and mysterious reasons the play did not run for more than the two successful nights noted above, and Lebedeff, strangely enough, seems to have left off the domain of the drama altogether. Thus it comes about that though certainly he is the pioneer of the Bengali stage, he had not that influence which might have been expected from such remarkable beginnings.

IV. *Western Influence* : 1796-1852.

Short-lived more or less like this but of far less significance were those stages which continued to provide entertainment for the English people only, and such were the Chandernagore Theatre, the Athenæum and the theatres located at Kidderpore, Dum-Dum and Baithok-Khana, in the first twenty-six years of the nineteenth century. They simply maintained the tradition of dramatic representation after European models, but more important was the Chowringhee Theatre (1813-39), started in 1813; it exerted a direct influence on the *élite* of the town who were usually invited to witness the performances. It continued its useful career up to the end of May, 1839, when it was destroyed by fire, but its most brilliant period was 1826-28. Its influence, over and above the impression that was created in the minds of the aristocratic section of Hindu Calcutta, was stamped on young students who, at an impressionable stage in their career, were induced to visit it by the persuasion, and even positive encouragement, of two of their distinguished and popular professors. Professor Horace Hayman Wilson, a great Sanskrit scholar of extensive reputation, whose work on the *Theatre of the Hindus* was considered to be memorable in his time, and to whom reference has already been made in connection with *Chitra-Yajna*, had married a grand-daughter of Mrs. Siddons, the celebrated actress in Shakespeare's tragedies. He was an enthusiastic supporter of this theatre and sometimes himself appeared on the boards. So did Captain D. L. Richardson, the well-known Shakespearean scholar, whose teaching

of the great English dramatist, as has been already referred to, Macaulay still remembered on his return to far-off England, and who was an adept in the art of elocution. He infused into the hearts of his students an ardent love for English drama, encouraged them to attend the theatre, and procured free tickets for them. Thus, a sympathetic atmosphere was created for the reception of the English or anglicised drama in Indian society, and such sympathy was attended with appreciation and understanding, to be followed naturally by practical attempts to imitate, in closer circles, performances which had been once so great a source of delight and instruction. Those wealthy leaders of society who were charmed by their new experience would now open their purse-strings and the students who had the requisite intelligence and initiative would now betake themselves to reproduction of this novel institution on their own fields.

The Sans Souci Theatre\* was built in Park Street, 1840, and began by staging Sheridan Knowles's *The Wife* in 1841, under the proprietorship of Mrs. Leach—the “Star” of the period. It enjoyed the patronage of Professor Wilson, Mr. Hume—a promising Barrister then, and later the Chief Presidency Magistrate—and other distinguished European residents of Calcutta. Its useful career was cut short by a mournful incident: as Mrs. Leach stood waiting for her cue at the upper right-hand entrance to the stage, her dress caught fire from an oil-lamp placed on the floor and she was

\* *Bengal : Past and Present*, Vol. I, 1907.

severely burnt before help could be rendered. This occurred on November 2, 1843, and she passed away about a fortnight after. The last regular performance took place there in 1844, but dramas continued to be staged in an irregular fashion up to 1846, when the building was sold to Archbishop Carew. Thence to St. Xavier's College was but a step, and easily taken. Thus the Sans Souci ran out its short life (1841-1846).

The stimulus supplied by these theatres bore fruit, as I have remarked, in attempts on the part of the Bengalis themselves to have histrionic activities of their own. The *Sumāchār-Chundrikā* voiced a general feeling when, in 1826, it appealed to the wealthier section of the community to combine and hold public shows in the English fashion; the money required might be easily raised by selling shares, as in English companies. But it is proper to refer here to a farce or farcical play, *Kalirājār Yātrā* which was constructed on the slender episode of an Englishman's journey from Calcutta to Chittagong, and which received wide publicity in 1821. But whether this was merely a Yatra with a satiric *motif*, or one of the earliest attempts to adapt the indigenous form to the western model, we have no means to ascertain, as the play is not available and allusions to it are extremely meagre. The title merely suggests that somebody (who is yet unknown) had been fully alive to Lebedeff's remarks about "the drollery of the native," and evidently the book was not a translation but an original production. The account of it published in the *Sumāchār Durpun* might lead us to suppose that it was more or less in the nature of a pantomime. It is quite

possible that the new models changed the nature of the Yatras to a certain extent.

Passing by this solitary and still mysterious will-o'-the-wisp in our search for early Bengali dramas, we come across the two remarkable attempts on the part of Bengali gentlemen of social standing to have their own theatres for the amusement of their friends. On December 28, 1831, the Hindu Theatre was started by Prasanna Kumar Tagore; it was, however, partly due to the initiative of Professor Wilson, and the naming of it might have something to do with the work of that enthusiast in the cause of Hindu dramas. It was supported by the patronage of such eminent citizens as Sri Kissen Singh, Kissen Chand Dutta, Ganga Narayan Sen, Madhab Chandra Mullick, Tarachand Chakravarty, —in addition to Prasanna Kumar with whom it was more closely associated. There was great enthusiasm and on December 28, 1831,\* at the Beliaghata garden-house of Prasanna Kumar, was staged *Uttara-Rāma-Charit* translated into English by Professor Wilson who, on concluding his translation, said he would rather call it a dramatic poem. It was staged in part along with the last act of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; this fact deserves comment. It might have been that with all the admiration that the group felt for Sanskrit theatre, they found that the knowledge of the new type had created in them a demand which the indigenous literature, however excellent, could not satisfy. English dramas had fired the imagination of the public, and it is interesting to note that one of the objects

\* *Asiatic Journal*, April, 1832 (*Asiatic Intelligence*, p. 176).



of this theatre was to stage English plays, and an English teacher was employed to train the boys in elocution, etc.\*

A Theatre, belonging to Nabin Chandra Basu, a wealthy resident of Shyambazar, was started as early as 1833; in 1835 it staged a dramatised version of *Vidyāsundar* at his residence which stood on the present site of the Shyambazar Tram Depot; who dramatised it, or whether it had emerged at all out of the Yatra stage in which *Vidyāsundar* was a frequent theme (it forms one of the four pieces collected in *Nepāle Bāngālā Nātak*, previously mentioned), we do not know; but some innovations were attempted, and these were received with enthusiasm by the audience. More than a thousand persons, and of different nationalities, attended the performance which lasted from 12 at night to about 7 in the morning. The painting of scenes betrayed lack of a sense of art as well as a want of grasp of the technique; the artist had evidently no idea of perspective. The music was mostly 'done' by Brahmins, led by Braja Nath Goswami who entertained the audience with the violin. The custom of uttering a prayer before the commencement of the play, followed strictly in Sanskrit dramatic composition, was observed. Every act was preceded by its synopsis, explanatory in its scope. Women of ill repute were in-

\* The Sanskrit play was chosen probably on account of the popularity of its theme and also that it might induce Hindu young men to take to the stage. An English play known to have been definitely staged at this theatre was "*Nothing Superfluous*," performed on March 29, 1832. (*Basumatī*, Baishakh, 1339 B.S.)

troduced as actresses but this created a storm of opposition engineered by puritans who were offended by this novel feature as well as by the taste for Bharat Chandra's works. The theatre dragged on perhaps for a few years and we hear no more of it ; it had succeeded in creating a taste for a new amusement, but for the time being there was no other theatre ready to take its place. Thus both the beginnings and the end of Nabin Basu's theatre are wrapped in obscurity.

But the craze spread to the student community. Shakespeare, as might be expected, was the favourite author ; scenes from his Merchant of Venice were recited by the Bengali students of the Hindu and Sanskrit Colleges ; many dramatic clubs were set up in the schools and colleges for recitation and representation of scenes from English plays. Their ambition did not reach to the staging of a whole play. Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice and Julius Caesar were staged by the students of David Hare Academy in 1853 ; and the students of the Oriental Seminary secured the efficient coaching of expert English trainers like Clinger of the Sans Souci and Miss Ellis. They opened an " Oriental Theatre," and staged Othello in September of the same year. Subsequently they staged also the Merchant of Venice in 1854 and Henry IV in 1855. There was a performance of the fifth act of Julius Caesar by some educated young men, including ex-students of Oriental Seminary at the residence of Pyari Mohan Basu (who was a nephew of Nabin Chandra of Shyambazar referred to before) at Baranasi Ghose's Street, his sons appearing in the principal rôles. But these carry us across our time limit.

While thus describing how Calcutta students in general were affected by the love of dramatic art which they imbibed from their teachers, it is at the same time necessary to point out that this introduction to the metropolis of a new type of popular amusement had, before the middle of the nineteenth century, succeeded in creating a demand for similar enterprises and in that way brought about innovations in the nature of the Yatras themselves,—the popular or folk literature indigenous to the country already receiving a set-back. Such forms of logomachy as Jhumur, Panchali, etc., began to be looked at a little askance; and the works of Dasu Ray and Krishna Kamal Goswami (e.g., *Vichitra-Vilās*) began to approximate to the western model, through what mysterious influence of the working of the time-spirit it is not possible to conceive or explain satisfactorily. It was in March, 1849 that a new Yatra, *Nanda-Vidāy*, was performed by a 'glee club' company, and was by turns applauded and derided by spectators. Ram Chandra Mookherji, a wealthy inhabitant of Jorasanko, had induced the *hāf-Ākhdāi* party of the locality, "the first musical association in Calcutta," to form into a Yatra party and had been both the secretary and the poet to it. In course of the year, some 4 to 5 thousand rupees had been spent over the affair, and in addition to the *bona-fide* members, the services of two girls—the older of the two, named Sidam, being about 12 years old—and of 6 or 7 boys were secured. The time for entertainment extended from 9 in the evening to 7 in the morning.\* But this advance to-

\* See the *Hindu Intelligencer*, March 26, 1849. This seems to be the first notice of the performance.

wards a reform in indigenous institutions failed to conciliate many individuals who had meanwhile been saturated with a taste for things of the west and who referred to the homely dialogue of these Yatras as the 'cart-drivers' language.'

So far we find young Bengali actors were trained in western methods, but suitable plays composed in the vernacular were not yet forthcoming. Lebedeff's *Chhadmaresh* was only a translation and even that is not available now. From the records of the Fort William College, we learn that about 1806 Shakespeare's *Tempest* had been translated into Bengali, either the dramatic form or only the story element in it, by a civilian under training, but no copy of this work has been found or described anywhere as yet. *Kalirājār Yātrā*, as has been mentioned, is also not forthcoming. But the demand for new methods of entertainment must have called forth the creative activity of the writers to adapt themselves to the English form or rather the western model. Many poems were called *Nātak* in those days, but they were so only in name. *Prem Nātak* by Panchanan Banerji of Shyampukur, *Prabodh-Chandroday Nātak* by Gangadhar Vidyaratna, and works like these were poems in fact and should never mislead the careless reader into believing that they were prototypes of the modern drama.

#### V. Western Influence : 1852-72.

The year 1852 is an important landmark in our study of the western influence in Bengali drama. In that year a notable attempt was made to intro-

duce the new model by a play written in the Bengali language. This was an original attempt based on the *Mahābhārat*. It is not known to have been staged, but all the same it served to set up a literary standard.

The name of the book was *Bhadrārjun*; it was published, as has been said, in 1852, and written by Tara Charan Sikdar. The want of a drama in the vernacular language was keenly felt by the public, and the *Hāsyārnav* in 1822, the *Kautuk-sarvasva* in 1828, the *Abhijnān-Sakuntalā* in 1848, the *Ratnāvalī* in 1849, had been written and published in previous years. One of them has not been traced and all of them are either translations of, or modelled on, Sanskrit originals. *Bhadrārjun* is of the same kind, but the centre of interest lies in its 'advertisement' or preface, to which attention has been drawn in an article on the subject in the Journal of Bangiya Sahitya-Parishat, Vol. XXIV, Part I. The plot was taken from the *Mahābhārat*, Adiparva, and the treatment modelled on European plays. Thus it had dropped the *nāndī* or benedictory portion, had introduced itself without the customary intervention of the *Sūtradhār* and his assistants, dispensed with the popular and highly entertaining figure of *Vidūshak*, and had taken up the division into acts and scenes as *anka* and *samyoga-sthal* (অঙ্ক ও সংযোগস্থল). To trace this last dramatic device as it has been rendered in Bengali works would be highly interesting. In order to understand how the author approached the western model, in what ways it seemed to him different from the Sanskrit plays, it is necessary to attend to the following

passages taken from his preface. “ This book has been written in a very novel method, therefore let me briefly give a slight account of it, which seems to be proper and very necessary. This play has become almost like a European Drama in verbal forms and in fixing up locations, but there has been no variation in composition, prose and verse. I have not adopted the procedure of some dramatists according to the rules of Sanskrit plays ; *e.g.*, first benediction, then the manager and an actress come upon the stage, their prologue and other action, etc. Over and above these, the Sanskrit play hardly differs from the European....The scene of the place of action indicated by the play is generally displayed in European Theatres. They do not require any separate dressing room, because, like the actors and actresses of this country they do not enter the stage after dressing themselves from a different place. Therefore I publish this book after arranging it according to the system in use in European dramas.”

“ এই পুস্তক অত্যন্ত নূতন প্রণালীতে রচিত হইয়াছে, অতএব তাহার যৎকিঞ্চিৎ বিবরণ প্রকাশ করা উচিত ও অত্যাৱশ্যক বোধ হওয়াতে তাহা সংক্ষেপে ব্যক্ত করিতেছি। এই নাটক ক্রিয়াদি ও ঘটনাস্থানের নির্ণয় বিষয়ে ইউরোপীয় নাটক প্রায় হইয়াছে, কিন্তু গল্প পত্ন রচনার নিয়মের অগ্ৰাধা হয় নাই। সংস্কৃত নাটক সম্বন্ধে কয়েকজন নাট্য কারকের ক্রিয়াদি গ্রহণ করি নাই ; যথা, প্রথমে নান্দী, তৎপরে সূত্রধার ও নটীর রঙ্গভূমিতে আগমন, তাহারদিগের দ্বারা প্রস্তাবনা ও অগ্ৰাধা কার্য, এবং বিদূষক ইত্যাদি। এতদ্ব্যতিরিক্ত সংস্কৃত নাটক প্রায় ইউরোপীয় নাটক হইতে বিভিন্ন নহে। .....নাটকনির্মাণ সংযোগস্থলের প্রতিকৃতি প্রায় ইউরোপীয় নাট্যশালায় প্রদর্শিত হয়। ইউরোপীয়েরদিগের স্বতন্ত্র নেপথ্যের প্রয়োজন থাকে না, যেহেতু তাহারা এতদেশীয় কুশীলবগণের দ্বায় স্বতন্ত্র

স্থান হইতে সজ্জাদি করিয়া রঙ্গস্থলে প্রবেশ করে না। অতএব এই গ্রন্থ ইওরোপীয় নাটকের শৃঙ্খলানুসারে শ্রেণীবদ্ধ করিয়া প্রকাশ করিলাম।”

We pass over the *Kīrti-vilās* (1852) by Jogendra Chandra Gupta and next take up a translation *Bhānumatī-Chittavilās* published next year, 1853, the work of Hara Chandra Ghosh of Hughli, who was Superintendent of Excise at Maldah at the time of its publication. We learn that it was designed as “A Bengali Natuck, though written much after the manner of an English play.” We also understand that it was the first venture of the author in dramatic composition, and that though it was begun as a literal translation, as the work progressed, it grew more and more independent of its original. The suggestion came from some scholar of maturer years, and Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* was the subject of his attempt. All this we know from the Bengali preface attached to the book. The scene shifts from Ujjain to Gujrat, as we are told beforehand, নাট্যাগার কদা উজ্জয়িনী ও কদাচিহ্না গুজরাট দেশে হইবেক। ‘The stage will sometimes be at Ujjain and sometimes in Gujrat.’ For acts and scenes the author uses the words *anka* and *anga*; there is a regular *nāndī* or benedictory verse, a hymn to Sarasvatī and an attempt to please “the assembly” or the audience on the part of the dancer by singing the pleasures of spring,—all this has been couched in the traditional vein of Sanskrit dramas, e.g., *Sakuntalā*, and tacked to the translation which has been named *Bhānumatī-Chittavilās*, Bhanumati being the Bengali rendering of Portia.

It might be pointed out here that the author has shown some independence in transferring the

centre of interest from Antonio to Portia so far as the naming of the play implies it. Bhanumati has two attendants, Sulochana and Susila, and the figure of Nerissa is replaced by the vision of Anasuya and Priyambada of Kalidasa's creation. Rhymes have been freely introduced and the heroine in the Bengali version has for her parents the king and the queen of Ujjain. These variations deserve notice, for they show what features of the Sanskrit drama were thought indispensable in the vernacular even by a writer who had received English education in the schools and tried to introduce English dramas by translating them into his native speech.

For convenience' sake, the other dramatic works of the author, Hara Chandra Ghosh, may be discussed here from the point of view of western fluence. His next play was Kaurav-Vijog-  
itak, published in 1858. But both the prefaces, Bengali and English, were written in 1857. The English preface shows that the previous work, *Bhānumatī-Chittavilās* was popular and well. "In 1852, I published my vernacular drama of the *Merchant of Venice* which was sold, at the suggestion of an (*sic*) European friend of education... But the avidity with which the work was received by the general reader, particularly of native whose curiosity was excited to see the work of *Venice* in an oriental dress, induced me to think that the work has been considered acceptable and that if a similar attempt were made, it might prove abortive." He decided to throw off the original and took to an episode from the *Merchant of Venice* at in the idea that its sublimity would appeal even to the westernised mind, the not fail from



mind of those who received English education in schools and colleges and were familiar with foreign literary models. It is a noteworthy fact that he claimed this work to be a historical tragedy, and if the claim is entertained, Hara Chandra would gain in importance in the dramatic literature of the province. He himself had great hopes of success from this book. "The subject upon which I have written is of great interest, and the change which has been carefully introduced in it, being altogether new, and agreeable to the approved taste of the modern literati of the country, and no pains and expense having been spared to render the work useful, and acceptable, I indulge in the hope that it will meet with the approbation of the reader." In the play we find the word *anka* and *anga* still used for acts and scenes; there are scanty dramatic devices, directions being sometimes given in sentences as in নান্যন্তে স্বত্বধার নেপথ্যা-  
 মুখীন হইয়া স্বীয় প্রণয়িনীকে সন্মোদন করিয়া কহিল প্রিয়ে দেখ-  
 or in পিশাচেরা অন্তর্হিত হন, কৃপাচার্য্য বিলাপ করেন at, etc.  
 "The *Sūtradhār* or Manager, looking into the dressing room, thus addressed his wife: *Sage, my dear,*" etc., or in "The demons disappear," "Kripacharyya laments," etc., and the "prose is antiquated, so that it is like talking out of a book. *Prasthāna* is used for exit in the middle of a scene and *Prasthānam* at its end. The long <sup>belicvidently</sup> artificial sentence is to be found both in the body of the book ইতি চিন্তায় আপাততঃ ধৈর্য্যাবলম্বন-  
 অতঃপর করহ, 'Have patience now in <sup>te</sup> <sup>hā</sup> <sup>thought</sup> and go on pleasing good men' and <sup>the</sup> <sup>chap</sup> <sup>preface</sup>

নীতিনিপুণেরা এই নীতিগ্রন্থে আমূল্য রূপা দৃষ্টিপাৎ করিয়া মদীয় শ্রম সফল, অথবা ভ্রম সকল দূর করেন। কিন্তু এতদ্রূপ গ্রন্থ রচনে বারংবার উত্তম করিতে আমার এমত অভিপ্রায় নহে যে আমি অগণ্য মাত্র গ্রন্থকর্তাদিগের মধ্যে গণ্য হইয়া তাঁহাদের পুণ্য নামের সহিত বরণ্য সমাজে ধন্যবাদ প্রাপ্ত হই। “ I request moralists to look into this book of principles with a kindly eye from the very beginning, and make my labour successful or remove my errors. But in repeatedly attempting to write such books, it has not been my aim that I should be considered along with numerous respectable authors and receive honour in the elevated ranks of society, from association with their names.” The glaring fondness for alliteration which is evident in this last sentence hardly fits in with an author disciplined by western education.

The next play written by Hara Chandra Ghosh was also a translation. It was Chārumukha-Chittaharā, rendered into Bengali from Romeo and Juliet, and published in 1864. The same traits as observed in the previous dramas may be found here—*anka* for an act, *anga* for a scene, and slight additions and alterations introduced to adapt the play to the “ Oriental dress ” and to suit the taste of all classes in the country. The language was accordingly couched in a simple and elegant colloquial style, as the book was meant more for the stage than for the study. There were corresponding topographical changes,—the Scene was located at Karnatnagar and shifted for some time to Travancore. But though the Manager and his assistant introduce the play to the audience in the time-honoured fashion of Sanskrit plays, the songs in the prologue are far removed from the tone of these and are cast rather in

the mould of the love songs of Nidhu Ray and Sridhar Kathak who were so popular in these days, *e.g.*,

তুমি যে কর চাতুরী, আমি তা জানি সকল ।  
 মুখেতে অমৃত বর্ষ, অন্তরে গরল ॥  
 মুখে বল ভাল বাস, মরিলেও নাহি জিজ্ঞাস,  
 ছেড়েছি সে সব আশ, পীরিতেরি যেই ফল ॥

All the tricks that you practise, I know full well ;  
 You shower nectar with your lips, there is poison  
 within.

You profess love, but do not care even if I die ;  
 All those hopes have I given up, that are the  
 results of love.

আর কি দিয়ে বল সখি ! আমি তুষিব তাহারে ।  
 ধন মন দিয়ে শেষে, যৌবন দিলেম তাহারে ॥  
 পর জনে প্রিয় জানি, প্রয়োজন তাহে মানি ;  
 তবু না পারিলাম আমি, তারি মন বুঝিবারে ॥

With what else shall I, (tell me, Friend) please him ?  
 My wealth, my heart, and at last my youth, I  
 have given him.

I know that stranger to be my beloved,  
 and of him have I need ;  
 Still have I failed to understand his heart.

It may be noticed also in this connection that at the end of each scene we have 'সর্বেষাং প্রস্থানম্' due, it may be supposed, to the parallel use of *Exeunt Omnes* found in English plays, and each scene

closes with a couplet or *payār-bandha*, corresponding to the similar and extensive practice in the dramas of Shakespeare.

So far as we know, there is a fourth play composed by him—*Rajata-giri-nandinī* (1874). This was a Bengali version of a Burmese romance dressed up “ in the garb of a modern drama ” আধুনিক নাটকের প্রণালীতে. Prof. S. K. De \* has drawn attention to the fact that Kshirode Prasad’s *Kinnarī* and Jyotirindra Nath’s *Rajata-giri* were derived from the same source. It may be noticed in connection with Hara Chandra’s book that the mingling of serious or tragic incidents in a book prevailingy comic has not been in accordance with the classical tradition.

#### PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

We have discussed Hara Chandra Ghosh and his dramatic writings in so much detail, because he loomed large in the period to which he belonged and is, therefore, of much historical importance. He attempted to introduce the western model through his own composition, though, as there is no evidence of his works having ever been staged, he could have no practical influence on the theatre of the country except in the sense of having created a taste among the readers of his books. The private theatricals started by the rich men of Calcutta—men of means as well as of fashion—played a more

\* See হরচন্দ্র ঘোষ ও তাঁহার নাট্যগ্রন্থাবলী, Hara Chandra Ghosh and his Dramatic Works, by Prof. Susil Kumar De, *Vangīya Sahitya-Parishat, Patrikā*, 1333 B.S., pp. 141-59.

important part in continuing the practice of staging, according to the new manner, plays composed more or less according to the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy. In January, 1857, an amateur theatre was set up at the house of Asutosh Dev, where the first Bengali play was staged; it was a translation of Kalidas' *Abhijnān-Sakuntalā*, made by Nanda Kumar Ray. The performance was repeated, and with success. There were other theatricals and the residence of Ram Jay Basak deserves to be mentioned because Ram Narayan Tarkaratna's *Kulīn kulasarvasva*, staged here, made a great noise. This also was in 1857. Kali Prasanna Singh attended these performances with great enthusiasm and set up in his own house an organisation, Vidyotsahini Sabha, which had its organ in the theatre styled Vidyotsahini erected in his mansion. Under the auspices of the Sabha, *Venī-samhār* was translated into Bengali by Ram Narayan and staged in April 1857. This was followed by the translation from Sanskrit of *Vikramorvashī* done by Kali Prasanna himself and staged at his house in November, 1857. The translation was published for "the Vidyotsahinee Sabha," and was dedicated to "His Highness the Maharaja of Burdwan" for his distinguished services in the cause of the vernacular literature of the country. The following passage from its preface is both interesting and instructive :

“বঙ্গলা নাটকের অনুরূপ বহুকালাবধি বঙ্গবাসিগণ দর্শন করেন নাই, কারণ অতিপূর্ব্বকালে মহাকবি কালিদাসাদির দ্বারা যে সমস্ত সংস্কৃত নাটক রচিত হয়, তাহারই অনুরূপ হইত পরে প্রায় দুই তিন শত বৎসর অতীত হইল সংস্কৃত ভাষায় নাটক ও অনুরূপাদি এককালেই রহিত হইয়াছে, সেই

অবধি আর কোন ধনবান্ ভবনে নাটকাদির অভিনয় হয় নাই। পরে সেক্সপিয়র ও অন্ত্যাত্ম ইংরাজি নাটকাদি বঙ্গদেশে অভিনয় হইলে হিন্দুগণের সংস্কৃত ও বাঙ্গলা নাটকের অমুরূপ করিতে ইচ্ছা হয়। উইলসন্ সাহেব লেখেন প্রায় অশীতিবর্ষ অতীত হইল কৃষ্ণনগরাধিপতি ৬ প্রাপ্ত শ্রীযুক্ত রাজা ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র রায় বাহাদুরের ভবনে চিত্রযজ্ঞ নামক এক সংস্কৃত নাটকের অমুরূপ হয়, কিন্তু রঙ্গ ভূমির নিয়মাদির অনুবর্ত্তী হইয়া অভিনয় করেন নাই, ও সংস্কৃত ভাষায় লিখিত হইয়া অনেকের মনোরঞ্জন হয় নাই। এক্ষণে এই বিজ্ঞোৎসাহিনী সভার অধীনস্থ রঙ্গ ভূমিতে বঙ্গবাসী গণ পুনরায় বাঙ্গলা নাটকের অমুরূপ দর্শনে পারগ হইলেন। প্রথমতঃ বিজ্ঞোৎসাহিনী রঙ্গ ভূমিতে ভট্টনারায়ণ প্রণীত বেণীসংহার নাটকের শ্রীযুক্ত রামনারায়ণ ভট্টাচার্য্য কৃত বাঙ্গলা অনুবাদের অভিনয় হয়, etc.” \*

In the next year (1858) *Sāvitrī-Satyavān* † was published by Kali Prasanna and staged under

\* “ The inhabitants of Bengal have not witnessed the staging of Bengali plays for a long time, because, in very ancient times were staged only those Sanskrit plays which were composed by the great poet Kalidas and others. At last, about 2 or 3 hundred years ago, the composition and staging of dramas written in Sanskrit ceased altogether and there has been no staging of dramas ever since in any rich man's house. Afterwards, when the plays of Shakespeare and other English dramatists were exhibited in Bengal, the Hindus wished to stage Sanskrit and Bengali plays. Mr. Wilson wrote that 80 years ago, at the mansion of Raja Iswar Chandra Ray Bahadur, Raja of Krishnagar, now deceased, a Sanskrit play named *Chitra-yajna* was staged, but the play was not in accordance with the rules, etc., of the stage, and it did not please many as it had been written in Sanskrit. Now, under the auspices of this Vidyotsahini Sabha, there is a stage which enables the people of Bengal to see Bengali plays again acted on the stage. First, the Bengali translation, by Ram Narayan Bhatta-charyya, of Bhattanarayan's *Venī-Samhār*, was exhibited on the Vidyotsahini Theatre,” etc.

† “ We know not why the Sanskrit form, seven *ankas*, has been exchanged for the European one of five acts. The dramatist gets no advantage from the alteration; and it is as well that in all such matters the Sanskrit be taken as the model.”—*Cal. Rev.*, 1859.

the same auspices. This was followed in 1859 by *Mālatī-Mādhav*, rendered into Bengali from Sanskrit by Kali Prasanna himself. With regard to the former, it was to be distributed free *বিনামূল্যে* *বিতরিতব্য*, the author declaring that his labour and expense spent on it would be amply repaid if it were found suitable for representation in the other theatricals of the city. The word 'Act' has been translated as *kāṇḍa* and 'Scene' rendered as *anka*; but it is well-known that the sub-division itself is of western origin. *Sāvitrī-Satyavān* follows Sanskrit models in the introduction of the story by means of an actor and an actress with songs, etc.; there are entrances and exits by a sudden pull at the screen, *পটোভোলনাস্তর* *প্রবেশ* and *পটপ্রক্ষেপণ* *নিষ্ক্রান্তাঃ* *সর্বে* 'enters by lifting up the screen' and 'all go out (*Exeunt Omnes*) by hastily raising the screen.' There are occasional songs, and passages in prose abounding in long compounds and descriptions of natural scenery intermingle with couplets in verse. With reference to the western influence in these theatricals it might be noted in addition to the above that the audience was mixed, many European gentlemen were invited to witness the performances, and the band from the Fort William served the Vidyotsahini as its orchestra. The implication of these two factors should be properly understood, for, in the otherwise eastern atmosphere, they sought to impart a new tone; the novelty of the music and the need of explaining the play to the Europeans and making them interested had both their significance and must have influenced the art of those who had organised the show.

The Paikpara Rajas, Raja Pratap Chandra Singh and Raja Iswar Chandra Singh, had started a debating club called " Our Own Club " which met once every week and led afterwards to the establishment of the Belgachia Theatre. This event was prompted by a casual remark made by Jatindra Mohan to Raja Iswar Chandra when Raja Pratap Chandra also was present, just after witnessing the staging of *Sakuntalā* at the residence of Asutosh Dev already referred to ; a permanent stage, it was thought, would greatly advance the cause of a national theatre. Hence the garden-house of ' Prince ' Dwarkanath, recently bought by the Paikpara Singhs, was chosen for the site and all arrangements were speedily set on foot. This was in 1857. But the idea of having a native drama written out and acted had presented itself two or three years earlier.\* The story of *Ratnāvalī* was selected and Pandit Ram Narayan, who had already proved his talents in *Kulīn kulasarvasva* and *Venī-samhār*, was entrusted with the work of translation. After inevitable delays of about a year, the play was finally staged in 1858 and the success was immediate and beyond expectation. The performance ran for three successive nights and was repeated more or less a dozen times on the boards but the attraction for such novel enjoyment did not lessen. In his letter to Jogindra Nath Basu, the biographer of Madhu Sudan, Gour Das Basak mentions the case of a rich gentleman offering a hundred rupees or

\* See Raja Iswar Chandra's letter to Keshab Ganguli quoted in Michael M. S. Datta's *Biography by Jogindra Nath Basu*, 5th Edition, p. 420.



more for a single ticket.\* In that letter we are also told that this single play cost the Rajas some ten thousand rupees. Keshab Ganguli, one of the group of actors, was warmly congratulated by Sir Frederick Halliday, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who attended with his family, for his histrionic gifts. The idea of having a national orchestra was realised under the leadership of Khetra Mohan Goswami, who “for the first time put into notation some of the native tunes,” and Jadu Nath Pal. So far there was no admixture of European musical instruments. The mixed nature of the audience may well be imagined when we remember that the Rajas who numbered many English, Jewish and Armenian ladies and gentlemen among their acquaintance felt it necessary to provide for an English translation of the play to help those of the audience not familiar with the vernacular. It was this that gave Madhu Sudan an opportunity for entering the field of Bengali Drama as a translator, and he was pointed out at once as the man of the hour.

MICHAEL M. S. DATTA.

Thus, strangely enough, Michael's first entry into Bengali literature was through his English translation of the Bengali version of *Ratnāvalī*, necessary in view of the English, Armenian and Jewish section of the audience which influenced the organisers of the theatre in this way. A chance talk, again, on the poor quality of Ram Narayan's

\* *Ibid*, p. 650.

work and we find him accepting a challenge to write a better play in Bengali ; *Sharmishthā* was the result and he won the bet. This was accompanied by an English translation, the author's own work. Scenic variety and beauty appealed to him or, for that matter, to his generation so much, that it finds vent in one of the letters of Iswar Chandra to his esteemed friend Gour Das Basak : “ No less than eight scenes have to be newly painted; most of them are already finished, and beautiful and magnificent they are without doubt.”\* *Sharmishthā* was immediately and immensely popular, but the influence of *Ratnāvalī* which he had himself translated clung to it in the affected prose descriptions, though the author himself was of opinion that this was dignified Bengali, and would be appreciated in the course of the next 20 years.† The prologue was an innovation in its own way; for, instead of any hymns or descriptions of spring, etc., the poet talked of himself, of the condition of his country, recalled its past greatness to mind, and prayed for a better literary taste :

অলীক কুনাট্য রঙ্গে,                      মজে লোক রাতে, বঙ্গে,  
নিরখিয়া প্রাণে নাহি সয় ।

“ In east and west Bengal, people are revelling in a false enjoyment of bad dramas. This is hard to bear.”

\* *Ibid*, p. 234.

† *Ibid*, p. 247. “ As for the Bengali original, the only fault found with it, is that the language is a little too high for such audiences,” etc.

In the general handling of the plot, in scattering *payārs* or other metrical verses throughout the whole, the influence of the Sanskrit model is quite in evidence.

*Sharmisthā* was followed by the two farces—*Ekei ki bale Sabhyatā* and *Budo Shāliker Ghāde Roān* (1859-60)—one satirising Young Bengal for its devotion to drink and craze for anglicised manners, the other falling foul of the loathsome sensuality masquerading in the garb of piety to be found in certain sections of orthodox society. They supplemented each other by attacking the vices both of Young Bengal and Old, condemning the results of western influence as well as speaking on their behalf. It is interesting to note that by the earnest intercession of vested interests, Raja Iswar Singh was persuaded to withhold these works from the stage but he was, at the same time, so much disgusted by this turn of affairs that he arranged for the rehearsals of English farces, setting his face against Bengali works of a similar nature.\* The career of the Belgachia Stage was, however, cut short by the untimely death of the Raja in 1861. The work of the whirligig of time will be seen

\* It is but fair to remember that objection was raised against *Ekei ki bale Sabhyatā* in an issue of the *Hindu Patriot* when a few educated young men of the Shobhabazar Raj family got up a theatre of their own, as will be seen from the following comment :

“ On last Saturday night the Shobha Bazar amateurs had their first performance.....It was the well-known and popular farce of Mr. Michael M. S. Datta, entitled ‘ Is this Civilization?’ .....we must cordially confess that this farce is not a fit subject for representation on the stage of a ‘ Family Theatre.’—*Hindu Patriot*, July 31, 1865.”

in the fact that Jatindra Mohan was dead against the practice of presenting English plays on the boards of a Bengali theatre, a contrast to the attitude of Oriental Theatre which, four or five years before this, busied itself in staging Shakespeare's plays—as has been previously recorded. One word more about Madhu Sudan's farces—in view of the fact that Lebedeff's versions and *Kalirājār Yātrā* are not available, they might be described as among the earliest available farces in the Bengali language.

They were speedily followed by *Padmāvatī* in 1860, in which the classical model is followed as in *Sharmishthā*. His thoughts at this time on the subject of dramatic composition find expression in some letters where he asserts\* that he would continue to write after the classical model for some time more and then would take in hand historical and other subjects. He felt that the national drama of Bengal should outgrow the restraints advocated by Visvanath Kaviraj of *Sāhitya Darpan* and that such a drama should make use of blank verse, the innovation in this respect to be brought about by a gradual process. Examining the text of *Padmāvatī* we find that in the first act, first scene, we may detect its close resemblance to the Greek legend of the apple of discord—Sachi, Rati and Muraja being parallels of Hera, Aphrodite and Pallas Athene, the apple of gold undergoing transformation into the lily of gold. The Greek legend is “Indianised.” Indranil, a mortal king, standing for Paris the son of Priam, bestows the prize on the Goddess of Love. Blank verse has been introduced in the second scene,

\* *Ibid*, pp. 309-316.

Act II, in the first two scenes, Act IV, and also at the close of Act V, in the speeches of Kanchuki, Kali and Narada, in both soliloquy and dialogue, but the magic beauty usually associated with Madhu Sudan's blank verse is missing. Then again, the shackles of Sanskrit models are not altogether shaken off, for the drama ends and the curtain falls with blessings on the King and Padmavati uttered by Narada, while flowers come down in a shower and a sweet song, wishing good to all, makes itself heard. Though this is a common characteristic, common both to the east and the west, the way is more Sanskritic than European.

After *Padmāvatī*, Michael Madhu Sudan began a dramatic work, *Subhadrā*; the first and the second act he sent to Keshab Ganguli (the famous Vidushaka of *Ratnāvalī* fame) whom he consulted on all points in connection with his dramatic attempts; Keshab was to him an "Avatar of the Roman Roscius and the English Garrick."\* He did not intend it for the stage but it was to be merely a "dramatic poem" in blank verse which he thought to be "the best suited for Poetry in every language."† The idea of continuing in the classical style had not ceased to work as yet; he thought about this time of trying his hand on some Muhammanadan topic and wanted very much to treat some "Indo-Mussalman" plot, such as the story of Sultana Rezia, into the dramatic form. His friends dissuaded him, urging that such a theme would alienate the sympathy of most of his readers of whom the

\* *Ibid*, p. 459.

† *Ibid*, p. 317.

vast majority were Hindus, and Keshab requested him to explore the history of the Rajputs for a fitting subject. It was then that he hit on the plot of the Krishna Kumārī. He wrote to his friend,—“ For two nights, I sat up for hours pouring over the tremendous pages of 'Tod and about 1 A.M. last Saturday, the Muses smiled! As a true realiser of the Dramatist's conceptions, you ought to be quite in love with *Krishna-Kumārī* as I am.”\* Begun on the 6th August and finished on the 7th September, in just a month's time, *Krishna-Kumārī* stands to-day as the high-water mark of his excellence as a dramatist. The many references to Shakespeare, to be found in his letters to his friends as the book was being composed, point out the influences which helped its production. Like Shakespeare in his higher tragedies, he is not studiously comic in any scene in this play but he has not, generally speaking, neglected to make a pleasant remark in the midst of the tragedy, when there has been any occasion for it. He took credit in its being a “romantic tragedy.” Ballendra Singh was to be like the Bastard in *King John*. Unity of place was meant to be maintained in each act. In point of diction it shows decided improvement on its predecessors, but even there Dr. Johnson's words guide him in his selection of naturalness. On the other hand, there are verbal similarities with Sanskrit verses, e.g., নদী একবার সমুদ্রের অভিমুখী হ'লে আর কি কোন দিকে ফেরে? “ If the river once turns to the sea, does it again swerve aside?” More important,

however, are his observations on the nature of the Indian drama and his decision to cast his work in a different mould as we find recorded in one of the letters written while engaged in discussing *Krishna-Kumārī*. "We Asiatics are of a more romantic turn of mind than our European neighbours. . . . In the great European drama, you have the stern realities of life, lofty passion and heroism of sentiment. With us, it is all softness, all romance. We forget the World of reality and dream of Fairy-lands. The genius of the drama has not yet received even a moderate degree of development in this country. Ours are dramatic poems; and even Wilson, the great foreign admirer of our ancient language, has been compelled to admit this. In the *Sarmisthā*, I often stepped out of the path of the Dramatist, for that of the mere Poet. I often forgot the real in search of the poetical. In the present play I mean to establish a vigilant guard over myself . . . . I shall endeavour to create characters who speak as nature suggests and not mouth mere poetry."\* From this attempt to create characters to the conception of a tragedy was a brief transition, and quickly over. *Krishna-Kumārī* has been declared to be the first historical and tragic drama; but the claims put in by Hara Chandra Ghosh for his *Kaurava-viyoga-Nātak* deserve to be examined; it might be contended, however, that *Sharmisthā* is equally historical if the *Mahābhārata* is accepted as history, this contention not affecting the position of Hara Chandra in the least. If the writer's attitude, and consciousness of a policy

\* *Ibid.*, p. 461.

pursued, be the deciding factors, it is difficult to admit that *Krishna-Kumārī* should supersede the earlier drama altogether, except in the matter of stage representation. Madhu Sudan was more anxious for the staging of his plays than getting them printed; and when Jatindra Mohan is agreeable to the proposition of publishing his dramatic works, he writes to his friend Keshab Ganguli to the following effect:—"I am not particularly interested in the question of getting the work printed. This I look upon as a secondary matter. What I want is to have it acted and acted by such an actor as your noble self."\* We may partly realise the nature of the innovation which the tragedy implied when we remember the difficulties in staging the *Krishna-Kumārī*. Jatindra Mohan was willing to present it at his own residence and made preparations accordingly; but his mother would not hear of it and would not permit the representation of a tragic story within the confines of her house, "within the sacred precincts of a Hindu dwelling," so it was not placed on the boards of the Pathuriaghata Theatre.

While dwelling on the western influence in Madhu Sudan's dramas it is necessary to emphasise his enthusiasm for stage representation. When, later on, the sons and nephews of Maharshi Debendra Nath at their Jorasanko residence set up a theatre of their own, Madhu helped it by all the enthusiastic encouragement he was capable of. The Bengal Theatre also owed its origin to his active influence, and it started with his work—when, however, unfortunately he was no more—work that

\* *Ibid*, p. 461.



was undertaken expressly for its benefit, but it was not finished when he died in 1873 and the fragments were brought out under the name of *Māyā-Kānan* or the Wood Enchanted after having been revised by Bhuban Chandra Mookherjee, Assistant Editor of the *Samvād-Prabhākar* and a distinguished man-of-letters in his own day. But the distinguishing traits of Michael's writings are not to be found either in this play or in that other fragmentary work "*Bish nā dhanurgun!*" "*Is it poison or the bow-string?*"—both written for the Bengal Theatre.

#### DINA BANDHU MITRA.

Though Michael Madhu Sudan's contribution to the growth and development of the Bengali stage was so rich and extensive, in 1860 or thereabouts, the more prominent figure in the field of Bengali drama was that of Dina Bandhu Mitra (1829-1873) whose *Nīl-Darpan* (1860) acquired almost an international reputation, not so much on account of its intrinsic merits as for the heart-rending pathos of the story and its implications. The oppression by indigo-planters was a reality, and his graphic delineation was a powerful weapon forged in the cause of suffering humanity which won the praise of the *Saturday Review* in its issue of July 13, 1861.\* The political purpose is first and foremost; probably it did not affect the general stage on that account. But if not in his serious vein, then in his comic touches, he exerted a potent influence on the generation that followed. Of his dramas, *Nabīn-Tapasvinī* (1863), though much extolled as a comedy

\* Quoted *in extenso* in the *Hindu Patriot*, 29th August, 1861.

in a westernised form, does not seem to have any long-standing effect on society. More importance attaches, however, to the fund of rollicking fun specially in *Sadhabār Ekādashī* (1866) and *Līlavatī* (1867) which lived in the minds of the audience both by reason of their own merit and on account of their excellent and wonderful representation on the stage by actors of promise and distinction. Both these were pictures of anglicised absurdities with the manifest purpose of satire.

It is difficult to ascertain, however, how far he was indebted to the west as regards the dramatic form or how far he modelled himself on the works of his countrymen. A full and detailed biography of Dina Bandhu is still a long-felt want and Jogindra Nath Basu's *Life of Madhu Sudan* just helps us to realise acutely what is lacking in the case of other dramatists.

Dina Bandhu had received University education, and had read in the Hindu College; one does not feel surprised to find his fondness for quoting English sayings; *Jāmāi-Bārik* (1872) has the following lines for its motto :—

“ Of all the blessings on earth the best is a  
good wife,  
A bad one is the bitterest curse of human  
life.”

Similarly, the following two lines from *Macbeth* are prefixed to *Kamale-Kāminī* (1873) :—

“ *Dun.* Dismay'd not this our Captains,  
Macbeth and Banquo?  
*Sold.* Yes : as sparrows, eagles ; or the hare,  
the lion.”

Līlāvati has three citations from Shakespeare, Elihu Burret and Cotlins on the evils of wine. That inimitable creation of Dina Bandhu, Nime Datta, the central character in Sadhabār Ekādashī, in his moments of exhilaration due to the use of spirits, quotes lines from Dryden, Milton, Pope and Shakespeare.

But there is a point of still more interest from our point of view in the *Nabīn-Tapasvinī*. Rati-kanta is deceived in Act II, Scene i, as any Shakespearean husband. The Hondol-Kut-Kutey incident is an imitation of Sir John Falstaff's fate in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, specially when the valiant and gallant minister is decoyed by Malati and Mallika (Act IV, Sc. iii). This might be compared to Act III, Scene iv, of the English play where Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page make the knight go into a basket, covering him with foul linen. But in Shakespeare's play the husbands are not in the confidence of their wives at the outset; and the fairy scene Dina Bandhu does not even attempt to reproduce. The character of Jagadamba, again, is without a parallel in the British dramatist. There are occasional verbal similarities, but they do not amount to much, *e.g.*, কমলিনীকে অত্যাখ্যায় ব্যাখ্যা করলে, কমলিনীর সৌন্দর্য্য-সৌগন্ধের অত্যাখ্য হয় না—Act I, Scene iv.—“The Rose, call it by any name, would smell as sweet.”

#### PATHURIAGHATA THEATRE.

Disposing, then, of the western element in Dina Bandhu's dramatic writings in this way, let us proceed to examine the development of the Bengali

Stage. Before the Belgatchia Theatre had closed down on account of the sad and untimely demise of Raja Iswar Chandra Singh *Bidhabā-Bibāha* \* by Umesh Chandra Mitra was staged at Sinduriapati through the efforts of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo reformer; Keshab was the stage-manager and Pratap Chandra appeared in one of the rôles. This happened on the 23rd April, 1859. Next we hear of *Nīl-Darpan* having been staged in 1861 at Dacca by the East Bengal Theatre—the drama was also published from this town. In the year 1865, one of the enthusiasts for drama, Jatindra Mohan Tagore, who had previously been an active and enthusiastic member of the Belgatchia Group and had always come forward to support Madhu Sudan in his enterprises both by helpful criticism and by pecuniary contributions, arranged for a theatre in his own house at Pathuriaghata for the entertainment of his friends, Indian and European. For eight years the Pathuriaghata stage continued to cater to the delight of the aristocratic citizens of Calcutta. An expurgated edition of the *Vidyāsundar* was, so far as known, the first play to be staged, and the performance had been reviewed in the *Hindu Patriot* in its issue of the 5th March, 1866. A series of plays of his own composition (and they were mostly farces) as well as dramas by other hands were staged from time to time and created a stir both in Calcutta and in the suburbs, so that we hear

\* "The scenes were painted by a distinguished *English Artist*."  
—"The Bengali Theatre," *Calcutta Review*, January, 1924.

† In 1865, Shobhabazar Private Theatrical Society had been started and it had staged *Ekei ki bale Sabhyatā*, while there were performances of *Nala-Damayanti* and *Induprabhā* at Baghbazar. Vide "The Bengali Theatre," *Calcutta Review*, January, 1924.

of various amateur theatricals arranged in this period. The orchestra was a novel feature of the Pathuriaghata Theatre and western musical instruments were utilised to produce harmony under the supervision of the gifted musician, Sourindra Mohan Tagore.

JORASANKO AND RAM NARAYAN.

The earliest notice we get of any dramatic activity in the Jorasanko residence of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore is the composition of an extravaganza from snatches of songs and poems from the popular and entertaining periodical, the *Samvād-Prabhākar*, consequent on the realisation that such a literary form was wanting in Bengali. The credit for this composition goes to Jyotirindra Nath.\* Though the materials were supplied by a poet of the indigenous school, the form is manifestly of western origin, and the term for it—*Adbhut Nāṭya*—was invented on the occasion. This was while Jyotirindra Nath was yet a boy. At his initiative, supported by his cousins, Ganendra Nath and Gunendra Nath, “A Committee of five,” as it was styled, was set up to arrange for private theatricals in their house. The first play staged was Madhu Sudan’s *Krishna-Kumārī*, and this was followed by his farce “*Ekei ki bale Sabhyatā?*”, both being limited, in respect of audience, to the members of the Jorasanko family and their friends. The attention of the guardians was soon directed to these youthful enterprises and, to mix profit with pleasure, a competition prize was announced for a suitable drama

\* Jyotirindranāther *Jīvan-smṛiti*, by Basanta Kumar Chattopadhyay, p. 71.

showing up some social abuse. After some time, the prize was withdrawn from competition and given to Ram Narayan Tarkaratna. The matter was then taken up, the rôles distributed, scenes were painted by Indian painters; candidates for actors' parts were taken in after due examination and the affair was no longer confined merely to boys. The *Naba-Nāṭak* was staged in January, 1867, with great *eclat* before a distinguished audience consisting of many well-known citizens. Justice Seaton-Car was invited to one of the performances and attended with pleasure. Lord and Lady Lansdowne were very much pleased with the histrionic skill exhibited. The staging of various plays that were placed on the boards was costly no doubt but the expense was no consideration, specially in view of the success scored by them. The nature of the first play staged and the absence of any direct help from English artists in getting up the stage will be noticed as comparatively free from western influence in these respects. But in the matter of concerts,—which constituted a novel feature, the only other orchestra being owned by the Pathuriaghata Theatre,—the introduction of the harmonium was evidently due to western influence.

It will not be amiss to devote some space to the discussion of western influence in the plays of Pandit Ram Narayan Tarkaratna (1822-1886).\* He was a Sanskrit scholar of some distinction and taught Sanskrit first in the Hindu Metropolitan College and then in the Sanskrit College. He became an author

\* *Nāṭuke Rāmnārān—The Prabasī*, Ashwin, 1338 B.S.

and received rewards for his successful books. Many of his plays were translations from Sanskrit, a few were original. He began in the right classical style, with a regular *nāndī*, *prastābanā*, season verses and interludes of verse, in his *Kulīn kulasarvasva* (1855), but gradually the western influence worked on him. He introduced 'scenes' as sub-species of 'acts' and called them *garbhāṅkas*; this was quite opposed to the Sanskrit sense of the term which meant 'a play within a play'; his *Nava-Nātak* (1866) was a tragedy and as such it was a departure from the classical tradition. The last-mentioned drama, as has been said, was written in response to an advertisement for 'social reform' plays.\*

\* *The Indian Mirror*, Aug. 15, 1865 :—

"The following Prizes are offered by the Committee of the Jorasanko Theatre for the best dramatic productions on the following subjects :—

No. 1.—Rs. 200.

The Hindoo Females.—Their Condition and Helplessness.

• To be handed over to the Committee before the 1st of June, 1866.

*Adjudicators*—Baboo Peary Chand Mitra.

Professor Krishna Comul Bhattacharjee, B.A.

Pundit Dwarka Nath Bidyabhoosun.

No. 2.—Rs. 100.

The Village Zemindars.

Period—Before the 1st of February, 1866.

*Adjudicators*—Pundit Eshwar Chunder Bidyasagar.

„ D. N. Bidyabhoosun.

Baboo Raj Krishna Bannerjee.

The dramas are to be written in Bengali, and must be dedicated to the Jorasanko Theatre.

The subject on Polygamy which, was advertized in the *Indian Daily News* of the 22nd instant, is, after due consideration, withheld from public competition, as the committee have been able to secure the services of Pundit Ram Narain Turkorutno for the task. The following gentlemen have kindly taken upon themselves (the) task of examining the same :—

Pundit Eshwar Chunder Bidyasagar

Baboo Raj Krishna Bannerjee."

Another drama, the *Hindu-Mahilā Nātak*, won a prize; it was written by Bepin Bihari Sen Gupta of Somra, Hughli, but was not presented by the Jorasanko Theatre, which came to a close in 1867.

JYOTIRINDRA NATH (1848-1925).

The efforts of Jyotirindra Nath Tagore should be here noticed in more detail. His first work, *Kinchit Jalayoga* \* ("Light Refreshments"), was of a reactionary nature, being directed against the movement, or rather the talk, in favour of female emancipation. Satyendra Nath's return from Europe about this time effected a radical change in his opinion. But the comic play was welcomed by the members of the family and performed with due *eclat*. An account of his career as a dramatist is interesting and it is given here to elucidate how far or how much he was affected by the new model or literary form, though in that way the principle of chronological treatment has to be waived here in its strict application. As early as 1874 we find him, then, coming forward with a drama *Puru-Vikram* or the prowess of Porus, keeping his authorship concealed. This was quickly followed by *Sarojinī* (later, in Jyotirindra Nath's career as an industrialist, one of the vessels which used to ply on the rivers was christened in this name) and *Ashrumatī*,—all the three bearing unmistakable signs of western influence. One of the songs in the last mentioned play first showed the potentialities which a dramatist, with a fresh outlook on

\* *Jyotirindranāther Jivan-smriti*, by Basanta Kumar Chattopadhyay, p. 186.



literary art, could turn into practical results, for in that song the western stamp is clearly evident. In this respect he was a pioneer. Apart from this, however, there were other interesting traits which deserve attention. *Sarojinī* or *Chitor-Ākraman* was an adaptation of *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides on an extensive scale and one of the prominent vernacular periodicals noticed this fact as early as 1875.\* Specially the central portion of the play was modelled on the Greek original. Both *Puru-Vikram* and *Sarojinī* were constructed according to principles of the Greek drama and the type followed by Sophocles and Euripides was thus sought to be engrafted by the young Bengali dramatist. He wrote another drama, a historical tragedy, *Svapna-mayī*, in which the plot is set in Burdwan, not Rajputana, the conventional resort for heroism and chivalry; that certainly shows a change towards reality, a tendency to leave the airy regions of romance, and the vein seems to have been used up. But he did not long continue as a dramatist; and the other play worth mention is *Mānabhanga*, an opera (later altered into *Punar-Vasanta*), one of the earliest of the kind, made up of songs the words of which were supplied by Akshay Chaudhuri—the most distinguished actor of the group—to the tune set by Jyotirindra Nath. His exit for the time being from the field of dramatic literature finds a parallel in English when Scott left off writing verses, saying “Byron beat me.” As soon as Girish Chandra made his mark and won recognition, Jyotirindra Nath abandoned that parti-

\* *Āryyadarshan*, 1282 B.S.

cular species of composition, and reappeared in the same rôle only after a number of years. We find him then taking up the work of translating Sanskrit dramas into Bengali which he pursued steadily and patiently, year after year, rendering as many as sixteen plays into the vernacular from 1306 to 1311 B.S., *i.e.*, from 1899 to 1904. But, while not minimising the value and importance of such work, such devoted worship in the shrine of learning and its far-reaching results, it is at the same time necessary to note that after his first fruits of talent and industry, he ceased to have any practical influence on the Bengali drama. He specialised in translating short stories from French and Spanish, but his gifts, though splendid, were no longer to be utilised in moulding the Bengali stage and guiding it along new channels.

#### OTHER THEATRICALS.

Theatrical performances were organised and exhibited in several quarters of Calcutta—by the Rajas of Shobhabazar (Raja Devi Krishna Dev taking a leading part), by Gopal Chandra Chakravarti of Baghbazar, and others, at Kansaripara and Sinduriapati,—as well as in the mofussil, Bhatpara, Janai, Harinabni, Burdwan and Chinsura, from 1864 onwards, and this fact serves to show how the new dramatic form was becoming increasingly popular as time went on, and how the stagecraft was speedily and eagerly learnt by the people.\*

\* The Bengali Theatre, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. The *Calcutta Review*, January, 1924, pp. 118-21.

Two groups, however, stand out apart from the rest by their comparatively long life and continuity of endeavour, by bringing to the forefront new writers of distinguished merit and by thus forming suitable objects of study as regards the working of the western influence; so they deserve to be specially noticed in this connection. They are the Bowbazar Amateur Theatrical Society and the Baghbazar Amateur Yatra or Theatrical Company.

#### BOWBAZAR THEATRE AND MANO MOHAN BASU.

Of these, the Bowbazar Abaitanik Natya Samaj was started in 1868. Some of the organisers had been in very close touch with the Pathuriaghata Theatre, having been introduced to it by an influential gentleman connected with the Tagore family and induced to appear on the stage there. Their mortification may then be better imagined than described when they found themselves unable to get in as seats were not available! This supplied them with a motive for having a theatre of their own. Thus the Bowbazar Abaitanik Natya Samaj, as it was called, was organised through the efforts of Chuni Lal Basu and Baladev Dhar, and they enlisted the support of Pratap Chandra Banerjee, a scholar and actor of some reputation. Even then the stage had not lost its indigenous character, the way to it was decked with festoons, and the distinguished guests—Indian and European, as usual in those days—who were invited on the occasion were served with betel, tobacco and refreshments. This no doubt was an expensive item but it was not grudged, for the management

and the audience stood in the traditional relation of the host and guests and the commercial spirit which in matters like these was a direct result of western influence had not then permeated the atmosphere. The theatre went on for six years in this way, and then had to close down for want of funds. As a product of western influence and at the same time as a factor in spreading it, it was a remarkable organisation.\* If it is desirable to speak of it in detail, it is so partly because this amateur theatrical society was the work of a few devoted workers who continued to lend their support to one, and one dramatist only. This was Mano Mohan Basu who in his varied literary activity as a writer of songs, a playwright of no small importance, and a journalist, deserves more careful and detailed study as indicating the current of the times and thus forms a fascinating subject as illustrating the work of western influence.

Mano Mohan Basu was primarily a writer of songs in more or less traditional fashion; he was induced to take to the dramatic form proper only through the impetus given by the Bowbazar group and his works betray a curious amalgamation of the east and the west. His first play, *Rāmābhishek Nātak*, published in 1867, was staged in 1868; this was in the *paurāṇic* line and as little in the nature of an innovation as possible. *Pranay-parīkshā* or the Test of Love, published in 1869, shows more independence, no doubt, but even here he follows on the track of the *Kulīn kulasarvasva*, the book having

\* *Bahubājār Prācīn Nāṭyasamāj*, Sailendra Nath Mitra, *Bangabānī*, Magh, 1330.

been evidently written to demonstrate the evil effects of polygamy. As we proceed through it, we find that the blessings of women's education are dwelt on;—Sarala, an accomplished lady, is busy at needlework and at the same time capable of expressing her fine sensibilities by means of poems of her own composition. Temperance also plays its part, for Sushila's husband, Natabar, is over head and ears in love with *kānchā* (opium) and *pākā* (*gooli*). But it is not the tacit approval of women's education and propaganda for temperance movement that need detain us here; the prologue of *Pranay-parīkshā* is more interesting from our point of view. The *nāndī* is here changed to a hymn, not to the Gods and Goddesses of Hindu pantheon but to the Formless Truth.\* The *nata* also springs a surprise by beginning his address to the audience in blank verse, though he does not keep to it.

এ সভা উজ্জ্বল বটে ! ওহে সহৃদয়,  
সদয় বৃধ-মণ্ডলি । সদয় হৃদয়ে,

[illegible]

পরমাত্মা পূরক ॥

মানস কমল দলে,            পবিত্র ভক্তি জলে,  
অপদ ত্রীপদতলে,        কর রে অর্পণ ।  
ঐশ্বর্য-পায়ুষ-পুরিত,    সধর্ম্ম-সাধু-চরিত,  
উচ্চৈশ্বরে কর অর্পিত,

মঙ্গল হবে সাধন ।

প্রসন্ন নয়নে, আর করুণ শ্রবণে,  
 করুন শ্রবণ দরশন—হংস সম,  
 নীর-তরুণী ক্ষীর-ভোগী হ'য়ে—বক্ষ্যমাণ  
 “প্রণয়-পারীক্ষা নাটকের” অভিনয়।

Here though the medium is western, being blank verse, the substance of the passage is thoroughly eastern or rather Sanskritic, and so are the attempts at punning *e.g.*, in করুণ শ্রবণে and করুন শ্রবণ in the lines quoted above.

In his third play *Satī Nātak* staged in 1874 but published in 1873, dedicated to Bowbazar Theatrical Society, he acknowledges his obligations to the Society but for whose impetus and encouragement his works would not have seen the light of day. While expressing his sense of gratitude to Dwarka Nath Pathak for having set his songs to music, he emphasises the need of Indian plays to retain their characteristic music in the songs, an element which is comparatively lacking in corresponding European composition, and this constitutes an essential point of difference. His words on the point deserve to be cited.\* “There is little of the song element in European dramatic poems; we need more songs for books of that kind. This is natural for our difference in national taste.....Some hypocritical admirers of progress, who are fond of imitation, when they look at the European model,

\* ইউরোপে নাটক কাব্যে গান অল্পই থাকে, আমাদের তথাবিধ গ্রন্থে গীতাধিক্যের প্রয়োজন। ইটা জাতীয় রুচিতেই স্বাভাবিক।.....অনুকরণ-ভক্ত কতকগুলি ভাঙ উন্নতির শিখা ইউরোপের আদর্শ দেখিয়া বলিয়া থাকেন “নাটকে গান কেন?” তাহারা বাহির দেখেন, স্বীয় সমাজের অভ্যন্তর দেখেন না। From

would exclaim : ‘ What has a drama to do with songs?’ They look only on the outside, but do not look into their own society.’ It is also to be understood that suitable tunes were adopted from Hindi songs through Dwarka Nath Pathak, among others, and the author says in acknowledging his debt of gratitude—alluding to both the preceding books, *Rāmābhishek* and *Pranay-parikshā* : “He has selected the kind of tune and the *rāg* and the *rāgīnī* that would go with it as would be most suitable, has modified Hindi Kheyals etc., to suit the Bengali songs so much,” etc. “যে রূপ রাগরাগিণ্যাদি সম্বলিত যে প্রকৃতির সুর সম্যক উপযোগী, তাহা নির্বাচন করিয়াছেন, হিন্দী খেয়লাদিকে ভাঙ্গিয়া রূপান্তরিতরূপে বাঙ্গালা গীতের এমন উপযুক্ত করিয়া দিয়াছেন.....”

It is interesting to observe that in his later editions he had to conform, evidently, to the altered taste of the audience by clipping short many of the long-winded dialogues.† The advertisement to the third edition of the drama informs us of another fact. Tragedy, being an innovation in the country, was not yet very popular and he was called upon to supply a concluding act in which the end would be not tragic—would describe the re-union of Hara and Parvati. He had accordingly composed and printed it, issuing only twenty copies. He took this opportunity, therefore, to print it along with the original play, *Satī Nātak*, in pursuance of frequent demands, advising those who had no objection to the new-fangled ideas to leave out

the dedicatory preface (কৃতজ্ঞতা স্বীকার) to the *Satī Nātak*.

† “ I have often clipped long sentences short ”—দীর্ঘ উক্তি প্রায়ই খর্ব্ব করিয়াছি—*Satī Nātak*, 2nd edition, 1877; *Pranay-parikshā*, 2nd edition, 1874.

the supplement. “ Though this runs counter to modern taste, it had been composed and staged for the sake of old fashions, and only twenty copies were printed for the convenience of respectable actors. I thought then that no more would be needed. But the directors of many stages as well as general readers continue to ask for it and cannot get any, as it is out of print; those who require it urgently copy it by hand. To supply this want, advantage is taken of the opportunity of the reprint to publish it as well. While staging the play, those who love tragedies may leave out that portion while those who are lovers of comedies may include it.”\*

This is not all the western influence in the book; we get a *Kalpanā Devī* in Act II, Scene ii, which may be traced to the example set by Michael Madhu Sudan. Balanced against this, the Sanskrit model inspired the prologue which is reminiscent of any conventional play composed in that classical language — “ If you cannot delight such a vast assembly, what is the good of that music which you have learnt with so much effort?”†

\* ইহা আধুনিক রুচির অনুমোদিত না হইলেও, প্রাচীন রুচির বিশেষ অনুরোধে নাটক প্রচারের কয়দিন পরে রচিত, অভিনীত ও সম্ভ্রান্ত অভিনেতাদের সুবিধার্থ কেবল কুড়িখানি মাত্র মুদ্রিত হইয়াছিল। তৎকালে ভাবিয়াছিলাম, ইহার আর প্রয়োজন হইবে না। কিন্তু বহু রঙ্গভূমির অধিনায়ক ও সাধারণ পাঠকগণ ক্রমশঃ চাহিয়া পাঠান, মুদ্রিত না থাকাতে প্রাপ্ত হইলেন না—তবে যাহাদের বিশেষ প্রয়োজন, তাহারা হস্তে লিখিয়া লইয়া যান। অধুনা তদভাব নিবারণার্থ নাটকের এই পুনর্মুদ্রাঙ্কন সুযোগে তাহাও প্রচারিত হইল। বিয়োগান্ত-নাটক-প্রিয় মহাশয়েরা সে অংশটি বর্জন এবং পুনর্মিগনানুরাগী মহাশয়েরা গ্রহণ পূর্বক অভিনয় করিতে পারেন।

† এত যত্নে যে সঙ্গীত অভ্যাস করেছ, এমন মহতী সভার মনোরঞ্জন কর্তে না পারলে তবে আর তার ফল কি ?



The subject was selected with an eye on the impression of wonder which was to be produced on foreigners.\* “What is wanted is the greatness of some incomparable lady devoted to her husband, as would, when heard, cause wonder in strangers, regard among one’s compatriots,—would educate girls, make ladies conscious (of their state), and old ladies repentant!” There are other points, of minor importance, and in the matter of diction, which may be traced to the indigenous source, *e.g.*, the ring of puns and alliterations as in the following passage :

হ্যাঁগা মা ! বিগ্ৰাবতী, গুণবতী, অচঞ্চলা, সুশীলা, গুণশীলা, যতই কেন  
হ’ক্ না, অবলা হলেই কি লঘু বুদ্ধি যায় না ?.....তোমার জনক জননী  
ভগ্নীগণ জনে জনে সপরিজনে স্বচ্ছন্দে আছেন, কোনো পক্ষে কোন  
অসুখ নাই। (Act II, Scene ii, *Satī Nātak*)

The *Satī Nātak* was presented for the last time on the boards of this theatre in 1874. Before the year was out, Mano Mohan’s *Harishchandra* was staged, and with success. Though the success of his literary works was great and the plays which he composed were very popular, his first work, *Rāmābhishek*, having passed through six editions in the course of six years,—a rare achievement, it must be confessed, for those days,—the sameness of feelings produced, and the abundance of songs set to exquisite tune, all contributed to make them appear more like operative pieces than dramas proper. Thus his *Pārtha-parājay Nātak* was classed as such in a leading paper which recommended him to wing his imaginative

\* এমন কোন অমুগমা পতিপ্রাণার বাহ্যস্ব্য চাই, বা শুন্দলে বিদেশীর আশ্চর্য্য, বদেশীর ভক্তি, বালিকার শিক্ষা, যুবতীর চৈতন্য, বৃদ্ধার অনুতাপ হবে।

flight to higher regions, evidently meaning the western model of a play.\*

How far Mano Mohan Basu himself had veered round to accept the new literary ideas will appear from his own statement about the book made in the preface. “ This *Pārtha-parājay Nātak* was staged as a *Gītābhinay* by a party of respectable young gentlemen resident in the well-known village Badu and other places. As a matter of fact, it was first composed to meet their request, and that explains the plenty of songs in the book. Those who will stage it according to strict dramatic principles may leave out the songs, that are unsuited to dramas, with impunity. Those who will stage it as a play with music may make use of all the songs.”†

This is a far cry from the preface to *Pranay-parikshā* in which there is advocacy on the part of the author for songs in the Indian type of dramas; reference has been made already to this.

#### THE BAGHBAZAR AMATEUR THEATRE.

Considerable difficulties were experienced in securing admission to the theatrical performances that were staged at the residence of the rich and

\* The *Hindu Patriot*, May 23, 1881.

† প্রারম্ভে বাদ্য প্রভৃতি গ্রাম-নিচয়-নিবাসী সম্ভ্রান্ত ভদ্র যুবক সম্প্রদায় কর্তৃক এই পার্শ্ব-পরাজয় নাটক গীতাভিনয়রূপে অভিনীত হইয়াছিল। ফলতঃ তাঁহাদিগের অনুরোধেই ইহা প্রথমে রচিত হয়, এই জন্যই ইহাতে গীতিবাহুল্য ঘটিয়াছে। যাহারা প্রকৃত নাটক শ্রণালীতে ইহার অভিনয় করিবেন, তাহারা নাটকে অপ্রযুক্ত গানগুলি ছাড়িয়া দিলে হানি হইবে না। যাহারা গীতাভিনয় করিবেন, তাহারা সকলই ব্যবহার করিতে পারিবেন। (পার্শ্ব-পরাজয় নাটক, তৃতীয় মুদ্রাক্ষণ, ১৩১৬)

substantial citizens of Calcutta. It was no wonder, therefore, to find that some young men of an enterprising nature had combined together in a spirit of self-reliance and with a view to have a theatre of their own. Thus Girish Chandra Ghosh, Nagendra Nath Banerji, Dharmadas Sur, and Radha Madhab Kar formed an amateur group by themselves; Yatra would not necessitate changes of scene, nor would an elaborate stage be required. Hence this was safer from the economic point of view which was certainly not to be neglected in the case of young men without patronage and so left to their own resources. Madhu Sudan's *Sharmishthā* was at first selected and its representation by an amateur party at Bosepara, Calcutta, was a success. This encouraged Girish Chandra and his friends to go in for a regular theatre, but the question of funds stood in the way. At this stage, after much deliberation, Girish Chandra suggested that Dina Bandhu Mitra's *Sadhabār Ekādashī* might be given a trial; it had then created a stir in Calcutta circles, and a popular performance would help in catching the sympathy of the audience. A social drama would be just the thing for them because it would not involve them in any expenditure on the item of dress. All this is noteworthy as showing how the objections against the popularising of the new drama were to be removed by enthusiasts. Girish Chandra had already won some reputation by having composed two songs for *Sharmishthā* which had been received with applause; he was also the oldest member of the young men; naturally he became now the leader and trainer of the group. *Sadhabār Ekādashī*, as it originally stood, lacked that indispensable item of <sup>গান</sup> song ( )

cast in the classical mould—a prologue or *prastā-banā* ; it is interesting to note that Girish Chandra conformed to practice, or rather to established tradition, by supplementing this with songs of his own composition.

Between the Yatra party and the amateur theatre sprung up a rivalry ; the former declared it to be an easy thing to represent a play by means of painting and behind screens ; the latter took up the challenge and successfully presented a Yatra in a fortnight. This then forms an interesting episode in the history of western influence in the Bengali stage, an episode in which the old and the young forms seemed to be fighting it out. The lovers of the theatre, Girish Chandra, Nagendra, Radha Madhab and others were reinforced by the addition of Ardhendu Sekhar Mustaphi, destined to play a leading part in future ; they formed the “ Baghbazar Amateur Theatre.” *Sadhabār Ekādashī* was first staged successfully in 1869. The dramatist himself was in raptures ; other distinguished gentlemen of the audience pronounced it an unqualified success. There were repeated performances of this play and *Biye Pāglā Budo*, winning applause from delighted spectators. The ambition of the young actors to build a respectable stage and rival Pathuriaghata or Jorasanko Theatre was, however, to remain a vision for some time, on account of their slender funds, but they were providentially helped by an English sailor, Maclean, who assisted. Jogendra Nath, a student member of the group, took advantage of an Australian theatre party camping on the Calcutta maidan to learn various stage devices. Braja Babu, the friend and brother-

in-law of Girish Chandra, procured the timber requisite for the structure, but the importance of his rôle in connection with western influence lies in the fact of his having introduced English notation and added English musical instruments, clarionets, to the band for concert. The increase in popularity encouraged the group of actors to style themselves as the National Theatre, the term national being then in fashion. The first play staged was *Lilāvati*, on a permanent theatre built at the house of Rajendra Lal Pal in Shambazar. It ran for several nights before a crowded audience. Many gentlemen had to go away disappointed for want of accommodation; as yet admission was by free tickets only. The question was now raised, whether it would be fitting to change the established practice of issuing these free passes by selling tickets at fixed rates for different seats, which would, it was urged, ensure certain returns to defray incidental expenses in connection with the stage. There was a split over it, and some of the actors, notably Girish Chandra, left, protesting against the innovation that was sought to be introduced, not so much because it was an innovation as in view of the fact that the arrangements were too poor to justify their demanding any monetary return in any shape from the public for the entertainment provided. The song \* he composed on the

\* The song deserves to be quoted *in extenso* :—

লুপ্ত বেণী বইছে তেরো ধার ।

ভাতে পূর্ণ অর্ধ ইন্দু কিরণ

সিন্দূর মাখা মস্তির হার ॥

occasion, about the personnel of the party which had decided to exhibit their show, for the first time in the history of the Calcutta Stage, on tickets to be purchased from the management at fixed rates, in slightly hitting every one of them, concludes with a very shrewd observation about the result likely to happen if the change contemplated were given effect to,—the existing social structure would tumble down, and every door would open to the golden key.

The year 1872 then marks a definite stage in the history of western influence on Bengali Theatre.

নগ হ'তে ধারা ধার,  
 সরস্বতী ক্রীণ কার,  
 বিবিধ বিগ্রহ যাটের উপর শোভা পায় ;—

শিব শঙ্কর মহেশ্বরাদি বহুপতি অবতার ॥

কিবা ধর্মক্ষেত্র স্থান,  
 বলকোতে বিষ্ণু করে গান,  
 অবিনাশী মুনি ঋষি করুছে বসে ধ্যান ;  
 সবাই মিলে ডেকে বলে, 'দীনবন্ধু' কর পার ॥

কিবা বালুময় বেলা,  
 পালে পালে রেতের বেলা  
 ভুধনমোহন চরে করে গোপালে খেলা ;—

মিলে যত চাষা ক'রে আশা, নীলের গোড়ার দিচ্ছে সার ॥

কলঙ্কিত শশী হরষে,  
 অমৃত বরষে,  
 জ্ঞান হয় বা দিগের গৌরব এত দিনে খসে—

হানি বাহ্যে হাড়ী শুঁড়ি পরসে দে দেখে বাহার ॥

*Efforts for a Permanent Stage.*

It is, however, proper at this juncture to recall to our mind that the efforts made by the National Theatre for organising a permanent stage for the entertainment of the public had been anticipated long before; the want had been acutely felt. The gates of the aristocratic leaders of society were not always open to one and all; their entertainments were, after all, private affairs and designed only to delight themselves, their friends and relatives; and there are cases on record to show that many, among them numerous self-respecting gentlemen, had to swallow their discomfiture and disappointment at their inability to procure admission, by any manner of means, to the charming shows at Pathuriaghata and Jorasanko. From the life of Madhu Sudan, it appears that the question of a permanent theatre had demanded an answer even by the year 1866, and the idea of entertaining the public for money could not have been far away. But much earlier than that, in 1860, we find an attempt made to cope with the demand (which must have existed) by issuing an appeal in the form of a Prospectus for what was to be called "The Calcutta Public Theatre." As only a reference to it has been made in the vernacular paper *Soma-Prakāsh*, and as it occupies an important place in the history of the Bengali stage, the text of this prospectus may be reproduced here.

"The *desideratum* of a Public Hindoo Theatre as a source of national and intellectual amusement adapted to the present advanced state of Hindu

Society is now gradually being felt by all civilised members of the Hindu community. The enlightened Hindu mind now employed in pursuits of intellectual improvement and capable of comprehending entertainments of a refined and more improved order, is no longer gratified with the much derided (derided?) Jatra and other amusements that were perhaps better suited to the degraded state of native society, deprived of its primitive civilisation and not cheered by any light from the western world. The cultivated Hindu mind, cherished under the auspices of its present rulers, now seeks to introduce and engage in these literary and scientific entertainments which form a distinct feature of European Civilisation. This fact is manifest from the great zeal and energy that have been and are being displayed by some of the educated and intelligent members of the wealthier Bengalee community in reorganizing the Hindu stage and improving it after the European model. But as these Amateur Theatres cannot be expected to be accessible and open to the public at large (the very object in such cases being the entertainment of private friends) a Public Theatre affording refined intellectual amusements and instructive moral entertainment, calculated to improve and raise the national character and constructed upon artificial principles and on a sufficiently large scale to be accommodating to the public in general is much to be wished for. Having such an object in view the projectors have designed to set on foot the Calcutta Public Theatre.

This Theatre will be established at a conspicuous part of the Town that may be convenient to the native as well as the European audiences.



Fresh tragedies, comedies, and *farces* composed by the best authors that may be available for the time being and suited to the taste of the present age will be acted on the stage of Calcutta Public Theatre at all seasons of the year.

The stage with its *Scenes* and wings will be painted and decorated by good painters after the present fashion &c.”\*

The “projectors” or those who started the scheme and issued the appeal were Radha Madhab Halder (also styled “Manager”) of 102/7, Aheeritolla Street, Calcutta, and Jogendra Nath Chatterjee. Unfortunately, no precise information is forthcoming as to what response was made to this appeal by the public but we are not left in ignorance as to the ultimate success of the prospectus issued.† What is certain, however, is that, due to the enterprise and activity of a

\* The *Hindu Patriot*, 11th February, 1860.

† “যাত্রা, পাঁচালি, বাই ও খেমটা প্রভৃতি একে একে সকলেই খণ্ডিত হইল, তবে কি আমাদের দেশের লোকেরা এককালে আমোদে প্রমোদে বঞ্চিত থাকিবেন? আমাদের পূর্বতন অভিনয়াদি পুনরুজ্জীবিত হউক। রত্নাবলী, শকুন্তলা প্রভৃতি অভিনয় দর্শন করিয়া আমরা ভাবিয়াছিলাম এই সভা আমোদ ক্রমশঃ পুনরুজ্জীবিত হইবে, কিন্তু আক্ষেপের বিষয় এই, আর উহার প্রসঙ্গ নাই। শ্রীযুক্ত বাবু রাধামাধব হালদার প্রভৃতি কয়েক ব্যক্তি সাধারণ রঙ্গভূমি করিতে প্রয়াস পাইয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু উৎসাহ বিরহে তাহা পরিত্যক্ত হইয়াছে।”—সোমপ্রকাশ, ৩০শে বৈশাখ, ১২৩৯।

“The Yatra, Panchali, Bai and Khemta have all been cut off one by one; will the people of our country, then, be altogether deprived of entertainments?—Let us revive our former plays and other means of amusement. Having seen the *Ratnāvalī*, the *Sakuntalā*, and other plays on the stage, we thought this refined pleasure would be gradually revived, but it is a matter of regret that it is no longer talked of. Babu Radha Madhab Halder and a few other gentlemen endeavoured to build a public theatre, but the attempt has been given up for want of support.”—*Soma-Prakāsh*, Baisakh 30, 1269 B.S.

few young men, a public theatre was started a dozen years later and performed before the public, admission being by tickets which had to be secured by purchase. In short the theatre was no longer amateur but professional, and this organ of western influence, this medium of amusement, was at last assured of a secure and permanent footing. This was in 1872, and the year thus marks, as has been said, a definite advance of western influence in Bengal. The builders of the stage in the years that were to follow were, almost all of them, agreed on the scheme and intent on doing as best as they could in their attempts for the improvement of the drama. The machinery of the stage and the main dramatic forms were, as has been noticed, taken up already and it remains now to trace its further progress under western influence through the next forty years, 1872-1912.

### *VI. Bengali Drama : 1872-1912.*

If Bengali drama may have actually come into being in the period 1852-72, then the next forty years saw its further development in the course of its popularity, influence and technique. These years brought with them the regular and professional stage with its actors and authors, painting, music and dancing, and the other constituents of the theatre (which had already been presented) prominently into the fore-front and these, in their turn, created a demand which was met as best as possible. As a powerful organ of public feeling, the theatre had to be recognised by legislation which sought to curb its sting by imposing restraints for the purpose

of maintaining peace and order ; this may be substantiated by the presence of the Dramatic Performance Act in the list of legislative penal measures passed by the Government. The period is marked by the writings of many authors of distinction,—Girish Chandra, Amrita Lal, Kshirod Prasad Vidya-  
vinod, Dwijendra Lal, Rabindra Nath, with many others of a lesser note. Apart from the fact that the drama is in itself a western institution, originally speaking, and that the stage machinery is an imported item in the list of our entertainments, the writings of most are characterised by elements contributed more or less by foreign models, and they should provide interesting objects of study from our point of view.

#### GIRISH CHANDRA.

. Girish Chandra (1844-1912) summed up in himself the main course of the public stage through all these years. He was nursed in childhood by *Pauranic* stories, by *Kathās* as they are technically called, and later, when he grew up into a full-fledged dramatist, these stood him in good stead by supplying themes for his mythological plays. This accounts for the essentially oriental or national stamp in so many of his writings. It was, again, the poet Iswar Gupta, who inspired him in his boyhood with a desire to win fame by the poet's profession ; he had seen the great man received into rich and fashionable circles with honour, and the boy's vision remained with him to spur him on to a literary career that should bring honours. It had

led to his becoming a regular subscriber for the *Sambād-Prabhākar* edited by the poet. Thus he carefully and consciously studied the rich inheritance of literary diction spread before him from the treasure-house of the poets of a preceding age. The extensive vocabulary which he had thus acquired was then applied by him to the translation of English poems,\* and this is a significant fact in the study of the influences that worked on the future poet. At first Girish Chandra took office in the firm of Messrs. Atkinson, Tilton & Co., as a Book-keeper and then the Chief Accountant; in that capacity he came into close contact with Mrs. G. W. B. Lewis, a friend and countrywoman of Mr. Atkinson's, whose books he had to keep. Mrs. Lewis was a brilliant actress in her days and she had been running a theatre of her own in Calcutta, her gifts being very much appreciated by the audience. She was at first amused with the frank opinions of the Bengali accountant on the performances at her theatre; but his cleverness interested her and, in course of her evening rides, he was a constant companion, and he then got much practical advice, suggestion and a general stimulus to his imagination in her talk to him on the subject of plays and their acting.

One of the friends of the Baghbazar Amateur Theatre, he was, as has been described, all along with it and seceded only when the National Theatre had agreed to become professional, accepting money in return for the entertainment. His objection was based on the fact that the Bengali

\* *Girishchandra*, pp. 38-40, Abinash Chandra Gangopadhyay, 1927.

Stage was not yet sufficiently advanced to expect any pecuniary returns and that it would have then to depend on the changeable taste of the public, thus losing much of its significance as a social and educational institution. Into the interesting history of the rise of various professional stages, this is hardly the occasion to enter; but the names—The Great National, The Classic, The Minerva, The Unique, The Star, The Emerald—are suggestive enough; most of them were popular and drew large audiences, proving successful concerns from the financial point of view and coming to grief mostly for culpable neglect on the part of their proprietors. A few important incidents, however, ought to be recorded here as indicating definite stages in the progress of western influence; the first benefit night performance was given on the 29th March, 1873, to help the building of the Mayo Hospital; the Great National Theatre was built in that year, after the model of Mrs. Lewis's Stage, of timber, and this was the first Indian Stage housed on its own grounds. In 1878, the Viceroy first graced the Indian Stage with his presence, on the occasion of a benefit performance in aid of the Temperance Movement; this indicated the growing popularity of the new medium.

Girish Chandra was very much in evidence in these theatres; in their making and unmaking he was an important factor; new stages seemed to be built for him and their fate depended on him, for if they could not secure his services they were likely to be ruined concerns. Thus it is true in a sense that he created the stage, and the line of its growth and development was intimately linked with him. Some

of the important facts in connection with his training and tendencies have been given already ; it will be sufficient, then, to say that he did not scruple to use English or western help as much as possible. In getting up one of his dramas, Mr. Pym who had some reputation in such affairs was the dress-master ; Mr. Willard, a well-known painter, was engaged in painting the scenes ; and he caused it to be printed on the handbills—" I have freely availed myself of European aid in mounting and dressing the piece with strict adherence to time and place."\* There is nothing surprising, therefore, if we come across signs of western influence in his plays.

On going through an account of Girish Chandra's life, the first thing that strikes us is his unwillingness to appear in the rôle of an author. Instead, he retouched the poems of Michael Madhu Sudan and the novels of Bankim Chandra and undertook to see them through the stage ; *Visha-vriksha*, *Durgesha-nandinī* and *Mrinālinī* were thus dramatised by him. Even Dina Bandhu Mitra's story, *Jamālaye Jīvanta Mānush*, was so utilised. Michael Madhu Sudan Datta won appreciation through his representation of *Meghnādbadh* ; this was for him uphill work, for few people could read blank verse in those days ; they thought the proper way to read it was to proceed naturally, as in prose ; and this fact is ridiculed by him in two lines of a song composed by him in a satiric vein.

হাত হোঁড়ে না পা ছোঁড়ে না ধীর হয়ে চলে ।

ব্র্যাক্স জর্জ পড়ে যেন নদীর স্রোত চলে ॥

\* Printed in the handbills for the third night of his *Macbeth*.  
quoted in Abinash Chandra Gangopadhyay's *Girishchandra*, p. 390.

“ Does not move the hand nor the leg, goes  
on calmly ;  
Reads blank verse like the (even) flow  
of a river.”

*Palāshīr Yuddha*, by Nabin Chandra, was similarly adapted to stage representation. When, however, plays were not forthcoming even though advertisements were issued for them, he was obliged to come out as a dramatist; he ransacked the sources of the *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat* and *Rāvan-badh* was the precursor of many to follow. In 1881 he had composed *Ānanda-Raho*, but it was not a success, for apparently there was no adjustment yet in his ideas. In the same year came out *Vraja-vihār* (printed 1883) one of his earliest Operas, and strangely enough, the song element in one of his operas, *Prahlād-Charitra*, was very much below the average, so much had his conception of an Opera changed in course of the years. Chanda was, really speaking, his first historical drama, the story having been based on Tod's *Rajasthan*. Apart from other traits, it is interesting to observe that Girish Chandra had adopted the function of the Greek chorus in interpreting or giving expression to the thoughts and feelings of dramatis personae, utilising it in the *Swara-sanginīs* in his *Deldār*. More direct as a result of western influence was his *Jyāyasa-kātyāyasa* (1906), composed in a lighter vein and modelled on one of Molière's plays. His translation of *Macbeth* was a remarkable production, a distinct contribution to Bengali literature, and claiming admiration for its naturalness in its version of Shakespeare. The *pancharangs* composed by him

were also after the western model. It may be noted in passing that he has used the term *drishya* in describing the divisions of the play in his farces and *pancharangs* as well as in some of the operas, but the terms *ankas* and *garbhāṅkas* have been used in his more solid performances, even in his *Ālādin* and *Ābu Hosen*. The influence of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* may be seen in his *Satnām* and *Vishād*, while for his frequent introduction of a woman in man's dress he may have been largely indebted to the Elizabethans.

In concluding this extremely brief account of Girish Chandra from the point of view of western influence, it remains to be added to what has been said above that he was no less distinguished as a trainer than as an author and that most of the actors and actresses of the period were directly taught by him and in this way he exerted a tremendous influence on the public by means of their histrionic activity.

#### OTHER DRAMATISTS AND THEIR COMRADES.

Of the many comrades of Girish Chandra in the task of organising the theatre, Dharmadas Sur specialised in stage construction \*; when the stage machinery was concerned, he was consulted and whatever success the Bengali theatre has achieved in this respect has been partly due to his efforts. Such modifications as easily movable or sliding scenes for rolled-up scenes were copied from the

\* 'Dharmadas taught the Bengali to build a stage.' ধর্মদাস বাঙ্গালীকে টেজ নির্মাণ করিতে শিখাইয়াছেন।—*Purātan-Prasanga*, Second Series, p. 138.



Olympic Theatre managed by Australian actors who permitted Jogendra Nath Mitra to study their devices at close quarters ; another of this band, though his field of activity was different, was Ardhendu Shekhar Mustafi (1850-1908) ;\* when only 17 years old, he had to shoulder much of the burden that fell to his companions, fired as they were all with a passion for the stage. Even at that tender age he excelled as an actor, not in one or two but in many rôles—as a woman, an old man, a hero, a Mussalman. Specially was his gift appreciated in the accurate reproduction of provincial dialects. He could, to a nicety, speak with the accent and intonation of Faridpur and Chittagong people. When *Ābu Hosen* was to be staged on the Emerald Theatre, he took care to pronounce the Urdu words that occurred there in exactly the same way as a man from Delhi might speak. His command over other provincial languages of India was so great that when he went to Jammu with his party to perform at the Royal Palace there, he translated the two plays, *Sītār Vanarās* and *Budo Shālīker Ghāde Roān* into Gurumukhi and so excellent were his powers of training that the party won great applause by these shows. He toured throughout India to popularise the dramatic art, but so far as Bengal is concerned the stage is beholden to him not only with respect to the training given to actors but also the make-up. He would advise the music-master about particular tunes, the dancing master about his lessons, the stage manager about painting and

\* *Ibid*, pp. 171-172.

dress. All the items received his careful scrutiny and he was one of the most powerful instruments in popularising or spreading western influence on the Bengali drama, or rather creating the Bengali stage on the model of the west. If ever there was a missionary in service of the theatre, it was Ardhendu.

Another remarkable member of that early group of actors and dramatists was Amrita Lal Basu (1853-1930) who first began his career on the Bengali stage as an actor, coming out next as an author of some minor farces, and later rising to be the manager of the Star Theatre. When he was too young to understand Shakespeare, he listened in rapture to his father's recitations from the English dramatist. During his stay in youth at Benares, he became acquainted with the history and literature of France and England, through his close association with Raj Chandra Sanyal, a college librarian.\* Though there are serious dramas of his composition such as *Tarubālā*, *Vijay-Vasanta* and *Harish Chandra*, his principal contribution to Bengali dramatic literature has been through his comic plays—plays like *Vivāha-vibhrāt*. It has been demonstrated that the character of *Blockman Fish* as drawn in Amrita Lal's *Rājā Bāhādur* has been taken largely from Sly in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, a fact which will be brought home if we merely read side by side the third scene of the Bengali play with the first and the second scene in the Introduction of

\* 'ইংরাজি পড়ার বেশা আমার খুব জমিয়। উঠিল।'—*Purātan-Prasanga*, Second Series, p. 81.

the English play. If we read হুড়ী for the Host and Kalachand for the Servant—the characters will appear to be not enlargements, but photographic representations even to the extent of the language used.\* His farce, *Chātujye Bāndujye*, has been taken from an English original, *Cox and Box*. Over and above this, the trace of western influence may be seen in his abuse of anglicised members of Bengali society and in his use of ‘pidgin English,’ in a satiric vein, as well as in his adaptations from Molière.

As one of the prominent dramatists in the period under consideration, the works of Kshirode Prasad Vidyavinod (1863-1927) deserve to be studied with reference to the present point of view and also because there are certain definite stamps on his writings which link him to the west. His work as a writer of plays has been characterised by variety, for he tried historical, religious, mythological, operatic and fanciful dramas. He did not follow most of his predecessors in their use of the word *garbhāṅka* to indicate ‘scene,’ but persisted in using the word *drishya* in that sense. In some of the plays, e.g., in *Kinnarī* and *Rākshas-o-Ramanī* there is a prologue in the form of a song but in most cases the prologue is altogether dispensed with. He makes a free use of this subdivision, packing sometimes as many as ten scenes into one act. Choric songs and duets are occasional features, but more important from our point of view is the deliberate

\* *Bāṅgālā Nātake Bhāver Milan*, S. N. Mītra, Bangabānī, Paus, 1330 B.S.

attempt of the dramatist to maintain unity of place as far as possible in some of his works. In his *Juliā*, for example, the first act describes incidents at Bas-sora, the second act deals with those at Bagdad, while in the third act, all the scenes except the first are situated at Bagdad. Under such limitations the dramatist seems to have adopted, probably as an experimental measure, one of the prominent features of the classical dramas of Europe, and, in that way, has provided an interesting topic for comparison with the views of Michael Madhu Sudan.

Dwijendra Lal Ray had captured the imagination of the public in Bengal for a few years with a grip which seemed to place him as the greatest dramatist of the country, but the years have again reversed this opinion and restored the proper perspective to a very great extent. He appears no longer as the author who had cast his competitors completely into shade. He wrote an account of his beginnings as a dramatist ; he had prepared for such a life by his previous training in English plays. He knew Manfred by heart ; the best passages of Shakespeare, that he read again and again, he could recite with ease. Before he went to England, he had seen Addison's Cato and Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar on the stage ; in England he attended many plays, and thus his fondness for the theatre grew more and more. He began to write plays in blank verse after Shakespeare and his opera *Shorāb-Rustām* was modelled on Shelley.\* There is much foreign influence in his tunes and harmonies, in his chorus songs, in

\* The *Nāṭyamandir*, Vol. I, *Āmār Nāṭyajīvaner Ārambha*.

the anglicised expressions of his speech. His remarkable persistence in the use of prose in preference to verse as the medium of speech in his dramas and the detailed stage-direction so characteristic of him as to be a mannerism point also to a foreign model, and the examples of Shaw and Galsworthy might have supplied him with the hint. His historical and social dramas contain much that is excellent and inspiring but it is unnecessary, for our purpose, to analyse them or to explain why he was idolised by the public on account of his plays.

In the matter of dramatic composition, Rabindra Nath has to his credit a considerable amount of work and, as in many other things, there are traits here which distinguish him from other writers. All his life he has been a lover of the stage and private theatricals have been to him a never-failing source of delight; they are a remarkable feature in the educational institution founded by him and they had been so in the clubs which grew under his immediate care. Though very young, he participated in the success of Jorasanko Theatre, the influence of which was not lost on him. In some of his later works he has declared in favour of the old idea in stagecraft in Bengal, doing away with scenes and scenic devices which, it may be feared, hampers the free play of imagination and chains it down to solid earth. It is a matter of speculation how far this return to old practice is influenced, if at all, by the theories of new art in modern Europe. Apart from that, however, as a dramatist we find that his works betray four marked tendencies—(i) representation of myths and legends in a new light; (ii) plots, more or less historical, treated more from

the subjective than the objective point of view ; (iii) comic efforts characterised by pure fun, free from any grossness, and from the need of playing to the gallery which mars the otherwise excellent effect intended by many well-known writers ; and (iv) treatment of symbolical themes by means of dramatic representation.

In whatever he writes, he consciously frees himself from any western bias or artistic prepossessions,\* and this is to be noticed as early as the year 1881 when his *Rudra-chanda* first saw the light of day ; as the *Hindu Patriot* † remarked about the book :

“ This is the title of the melodrama from the pen of a Writer, who belongs to a nest of singing birds, and to whose credit it may be said that amid great temptations they have made literature and poetry the vocation of their life. The sons and daughters of the venerable Babu Devendra Nath Tagore have set an example which the scions of our noble families might follow with advantage and credit. As regards the performance under notice we need scarcely say it is not a drama properly so-called nor an opera. Of course the writer would not stoop to the composition of farces, and his performance is not a farce. It is a sort of interlocutory poem, short but sweet.

“ The Writer, we may add, not long ago visited Europe, and though fond of English scenes and the English people, his Anglican partiality has not

\* *Vide Prabāsī*, Jyāishtha, 1339 B.S.

† *The Hindu Patriot*, May 23, 1881.

made him so unpatriotic as to abjure his national language and the habits and customs of the country of his birth. He is culling honey from foreign flowers to enrich his home, but is quite national in his tone and feeling."

It is customary to find the name of Rabindra Nath as a dramatist somehow associated with that of Maeterlinck, possibly because both represent life's problems by means of symbols; but such representation, it is needless to say, is not unfamiliar to the Bengali mind; the *Prabodha-chandroday* is one of the many works of Iswar Gupta which may be mentioned in this connection. The difference in the method of the older and the younger Bengali poet is due no doubt partly to the intervening period and partly to the peculiar temperament of Rabindra Nath. Again, a chronological examination of their dramatic writings will convince the student that the last production of Tagore's first period almost synchronises with the first appearance on the stage of Maeterlinck's plays, as the following table will show, and that within this period the brilliance of Tagore's workmanship forms a curious contrast to the almost uniform insistence on the part of the Belgian writer on death and the gloomy atmosphere of the tragedy of life.

RABINDRA NATH	MAETERLINCK
1881 <i>Rudrachanda,</i> <i>Bhagnakriday.</i>	1890 <i>Princes Maleine,</i> <i>The Blind,</i>
1883 <i>Vālmiki-Pratibhā.</i>	<i>The Intruder.</i>
1884 <i>Nalinī.</i>	1891 <i>The Seven Princes.</i>
1885 <i>Kāl-Mrigayā,</i> <i>Māyār-Khelā,</i> <i>Prakritir Pratishodh.</i>	1892 <i>Pelleas and Melisande.</i> 1894 <i>Alladine and Palomides</i> <i>Home,</i> <i>The Death of Tintagiles.</i> 1896 <i>Aglavane and Selysette.</i>

If any connection between Rabindra Nath and Maeterlinck in the matter of dramatic workmanship is at all possible, it must have been that Tagore was confirmed in the idea of adopting the dramatic form for the purpose of conveying truths by way of symbolism and that his later writings in this respect approach more closely the Belgian dramatist than older plays composed in Sanskrit and their Bengali imitations; thus the human element is subtly interwoven into the symbolic characters in Tagore just as in Maeterlinck.

In thus confining our treatment only to some of the principal dramatists belonging to the period, many traits have been doubtless overlooked. The varieties distinguished under the head of operas arrest attention; serious opera, comic opera, tragic opera (as in *Hara-vilāp*, by Radha Nath Mitra), new operatic mask (as in *Nava-bāsar*, with musical notation by the same author, Radha Nath Mitra, and described or explained in Bengali as ভাবানুযায়িক সুর সংযোজিত ক্ষুদ্র গীতি নাট্য), all sorts have been attempted more or less inspired by western influence. The first opera was said to have been composed by Hari Mohan Ray about 1865. Its name was *Jānakī-vilāp*.<sup>\*</sup> Many dramatists who once achieved distinction

\* “অপার,” অর্থাৎ বিপ্লব গীতিকা, এ পর্যন্ত কেহই প্রণয়ন করেন নাই। বহুদিন হইল, আমি জানকী-বিলাপ নামে একখানি গীতিকা রচনা করি। স্বর্গীয় বাবু গ্রামচরণ মল্লিক মহাশয় নিজ ব্যয়ে সমধিক উৎসাহের সহিত উক্ত গীতিকার অভিনয় করিয়াছিলেন। ফলতঃ তৎকালে জানকী-বিলাপ খানি কথঞ্চিৎ “অপারার” আদর্শরূপ হইয়াছিল। প্রায় দশ বারো বৎসর অতীত হইল, উক্তরূপ গীতিকার অভিনয়ে আর কেহই যত্নবান হন নাই। Preface to the *Mānini*, Hari Mohan Ray, 1875.



and have now been merged in oblivion are necessarily omitted. Such had been Lakshmi Narayan Chakravarti whose *Nandavanshochchhed Nātak* in 1873 was acclaimed as the best tragedy in the language. In the *Bhāratī*, from 1284 began to appear Bengali translations of various passages from foreign writers possessing dramatic interest, e.g., the famous speech of Mark Antony in *Julius Cæsar*, the first scene in *Macbeth* of the meeting of the witches; scenes from Molière translated from the original French, etc.

The year 1912 presents a definite landmark on account of Girish Chandra's death in that year which is a significant event in the world of Bengali drama; Mano Mohan Basu's death had preceded by a few days.

### VII. 1912 and After.

During the few years that have since passed, it is impossible to fix any characteristic trait and to link accurately the present with the past. But certain observations may still be made, and there are interesting facts to be noted likewise. The services of the drama as a means of propaganda have been utilised by the Government, and the results are *Devadūta* and similar plays composed under the patronage of the Public Health Department; the *Devadūta* \* was composed in connection with Child Welfare work and professedly in imitation of *Everyday Godmothers* staged by English boys and girls. The dramas of Maeterlinck have been partly translated by

\* By Prof. Manmatha Mohan Bose.

Sourindra Mohan Mukherji. The composition of one-act plays full of psychological interest by Manmatha Ray is a new feature and it is not very difficult to point out similar plays in the west. A new experiment is also being made in the staging of Tagore's plays on the public theatres of Calcutta, and it has succeeded at least in one instance. But the Pauranic plays still hold the audience and it seems that Girish Chandra's words to Nabin Chandra on the subject of dramatising his *Kurukshetra*—'The time will come when the craze for lip-deep patriotism as at present will pass away and Pauranic plays will again be appreciated'—have at last proved true. Lastly, in spite of traces of western influence still persisting and acting in new lines, as has been pointed out above, it may be remarked that the age of tutelage and dependence on English models is over, on account of greater insistence upon reality, *e.g.*, in the painting of scenes; and the naming of *Nātya Mandir*, *Nātya Niketan*, etc., has a significance of its own. Of late, a formidable rival to the stage has made its appearance in the form of the cinema, a western medium, and as in other countries it is bound to exert an influence on the future of the drama which, however, may be expected to retain its hold on the country because of its being more closely allied to life, and far less mechanical than the cinema.

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## CHAPTER VII

### Influence in Prose Forms

#### *I. Preliminary Remarks.*

The slightness of Bengali prose in pre-British days is an admitted fact, and there can be simply no comparison between prose before and after the days of British influence. It is no doubt true, as it has been asserted again and again, that prose is a later phenomenon in the evolution of literary forms, —but the principal European vernacular literatures had developed virile prose and cultivated it fairly extensively before the expiry of the seventeenth century, and thus preceded Bengali by two hundred years, if not more. What is striking in this connection is the wide prevalence of verse in contradistinction to prose in the history of Bengali literature before the nineteenth century, and the possible influence of Sanskrit in this matter has been already noted in the introductory chapter. One naturally recalls to mind the defence set up by a school of early Bengali dramatists, that the Indians have a special aptitude for music, for beautiful sounds and cadences; that this aptitude leads them more to verse than to prose; and that such aptitude should not be spoilt by imitation of western manners. Whatever be the reason, it is rather interesting to dwell on and discuss this peculiar or curious characteristic, the abandonment of what seems to-day the more natural and direct of the literary forms and an almost inexplicable preference for versifying in Sanskrit, and consequently in the vernaculars, even when writing on subjects furthest removed from

poetry and music—history, mathematics and dictionary. When we place side by side for the purpose of comparison Bengali prose and verse literature of the years gone by, or the prose literature before and after the nineteenth century, there is no gainsaying the wonderful transformation brought about since. Reference has been already made to Bengali prose in the *Shūnyapurān* and elsewhere in the introductory chapter of this book, and in addition we may cite Blunhardt's Catalogue of the *Marathi, Gujrathi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Pustu and Sindhi MSS. in the Library of the British Museum*.<sup>\*</sup> Few manuscripts in this catalogue date from before the 18th century, and most of the collection is by Ha'hed of the Bengali Grammar fame. Some passages have, however, been selected which point unmistakably to the existence or gradual prevalence of prose.

The comparative dearth of prose has been, time and again, noticed by all students of Bengali literature and our business here is to point to it, to indicate, more or less approximately, the wide extent of western influence and its extensive results. Prose had never before, in any large measure, outgrown the nature of comments, or notes by way of explanation or comment. Hence the sudden growth of prose, conducted with great speed and also with systematic efforts by people who felt its want either through their acquaintance with other literatures or by reason of their ratiocinative nature and temperament, is one of the marked results or signs of the new lines along which Bengali literature was

\* "ত্রিংশ মিউজিয়মে কতকগুলি কাগজ পত্র", by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. *Vangiya Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā*, 1329 B.S.

to develop, and it is a subject which falls within the scope of our legitimate enquiry; we should see how far western influence was responsible for the rapid adoption and easy assimilation of prose forms.

## *II. Technique—Grammar and Dictionary.*

For the proper consolidation of prose, the pioneer writers felt the necessity of codifying the laws of the language and of compiling a word-book which would be handy for consultation in cases of difficulty. It may be pointed out, however, that the fact of verse being the accepted literary medium for the expression and conveyance of ideas limits the growth of the literature and confines it to particular classes of men, men who are trained in the classics and who realise the power of euphony and rhythm while the tendency of prose is to throw open the gates of literary expression wider and wider, and to formulate rules of composition for guidance in practice.

The advent of English literary models on the field led to the clearing of the language from Persian words and idioms to a very large extent, so that, generally speaking, one finds a curious contrast when comparing a Bengali passage cast in that mould with one after English influence had done its work. It is not a fact that all pre-western prose was coloured by the Persian tint, but whatever there was of it gradually faded away and we may suggest, that this process of gradual elimination was accelerated by contact with the west which drew attention to a different source, so that the literature seems now to be so much of a

foreign element to the Muhammadans that some of them are trying now to re-introduce old words or introduce new words definitely possessed of a fresh and Persian flavour, *e.g.*, *khun* (blood), *shahid* (a martyr), *sher* (a sword), etc.

Those who took their cue from English books were naturally fond of English turns of expression and thus there came to be two different ideals of sentence-construction in the language. New words also have been added; we have picked up many like জানালা, আলকাতরা, ট্রেন, টাইম, গ্যাস, কুলেজ, স্কুল, লাইব্রেরী, ফিতা, সার্কেলাইট not only from English but from other western languages as well, the words *jānālā* and *fitā*, for example, coming directly from the Portuguese originals 'janella' and 'fita.' So much did the anglicised Bengali mix English words in his speech, that at least in conversation it lost its indigenous character and deserved to be held up to ridicule, as the dramatist Ram Narayan satirised it.\* আমি থিঙ্ক করি, তাঁর সে ডেঞ্জর এখনো হাং কচে—*Āmi* 'think' kari, tānr se 'danger' ekhano 'hang' kachye. An interesting parallel is supplied by the Persian language † which has likewise assimilated many French words and phrases, *e.g.*, *chemin-de-fer* has become a household word *Shemin-de-fa* understood even by the Persian peasant who is quite innocent of the French original. In Bengali, much of this modelling on English phrases has now been given up, and words

\* *Nava-nātak*, Act III.

† Prof. Aga K. Shirazi of the Calcutta University has in hand the preparation of a list of Persian words distinctly borrowed from French. Cf. *budjah* for Fr. *budget*, *āskālā* for Fr. *escaliér*, *gar* for Fr. *gare*.

like আগের সংখ্যার লাগাড \* for “ in continuation from the previous issue ” have died out. Even from the best of our writers and the greatest, comes a clause like

যার কাছে

আরাম লজ্জিত শির নত করিয়াছে

which seems to be unconsciously modelled on English turns of expression. Again, what would be thought of a sentence like this : শ্রবণ কর, আর কাঁপিতে থাক —which appeared in the *Lāvanyavatī* (1875), a novel “freely translated from English” by Parbati Charan Mookherjee? It was not for nothing that Bankim Chandra, even when he had been acknowledged the highest authority in Bengali language and literature, said with regret : † আমার লেখা আজও রীতিমত বাঙ্গালা হয় নাই। আজও দেখিতে পাই স্থানে স্থানে যেন ইংরাজীর অনুবাদ করিয়াছি। .... এখনকার প্রায় সমস্ত ইংরাজী শিক্ষিত লোকের বাঙ্গালারই এই দোষ। .. চন্দ্রনাথের শকুন্তলা দেখেছ ত, চন্দ্রনাথ একেবারে বাঙ্গালা অক্ষরে ইংরাজী লিখেছিলেন—খুব খাটতে হয়েছিল।

Still, a sentence like the following which is either English or Sanskrit but certainly not Bengali would appear in his writings—

নিষ্ফল হইয়া ফিরিয়া আসিয়া সীতারামের নিকট সবিশেষ নিবেদিত হইল। ( সীতারাম, ৮ম পরিচ্ছেদ ) ‡

\* In the now defunct magazine Bangabandhu.

† “ My writing has not become really Bengali even now. Even now I come across passages here and there which seem to be translations from English. This defect is present in the Bengali of almost all who have to-day got an English education. You have seen Chandra Nath's *Sakuntalā*; he simply wrote English in Bengali type.....I had to take great pains.”

‡ “ On returning unsuccessful, everything in detail was made known to Sitaram.”

It may be interesting to quote here from a reviewer in the *Calcutta Review* of 1884, who, disgusted with the anglicised expressions that abounded in Bengali as written by authors trained in English scholarship, remarked, while passing judgment on the *Bediya Bālikā*, a Bengali version of some French novel composed by Umesh Chandra Datta :—

“ We find almost invariably that in translating from English into Bengali, Bengali writers closely imitate the idiom, style, and structural peculiarities of the original as if there were a legislative enactment or religious ordinance which prevents them from throwing the original English into a purely Bengali form.”

In support of this remark he quotes :

এমত সময়ে সকল গোলমাল ধামাইয়া ‘চুপ’ এই কথাটি হঠাৎ ধ্বনিত হইল। .....আমি বেশ বলিতে পারি আমাদের ফাঁসি বাইবার যেমন ইচ্ছা, অত্ৰ ব্যক্তির এখানে আসিবারও তেমন ইচ্ছা।

Writing a little more than fifteen years ago Professor Jogesh Chandra Ray, in the preface to his grammar of the Bengali Language, enumerated four grammars already existing in the field that he came across—and these were by Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Shyama Charan Ganguli, Nakuleswar Vidyabhushan and Loharam Siroratna, though MM. Haraprasad Sastri referred to 250 grammars in the 8th volume of the *Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā*. The requirements of school curriculum throughout the province may have called into being many more since that time; but it is remarkable that the first attempts in this direction were made pre-eminently by



the new-comers from Europe who wanted to make a systematic study of the language or form of prose which they had to adopt for propaganda or for efficient administrative work. Naturally, the form of prose was moulded to a certain extent by their ideas of the Bengali language, and this is why in our study of western influence in prose forms we cannot omit all mention of their attempts, however experimental they were.

As these come up to be considered, we find a marked influence of the west. Let us first take up grammars published before the nineteenth century; we find two remarkable attempts made, both by westerners. The first of these was by Padre Manoel da Assumpçam, a Portuguese missionary who lived for some time in East Bengal, and who, recognising the importance for the missionary of acquiring mastery over the vernacular, formulated in 1743 rules in the mode of Latin Grammar and made use of examples in the form of Bengali words. A facsimile reprint of his Grammar published from Lisbon has been published with a Bengali rendering by the Calcutta University. The next name is that of Nathaniel Brasey Halhed whose *Bengali Grammar* was printed at Hughli and published in 1778. This also had European learners in view, as is to be inferred from the initial words—

বোধপ্রকাশ° শব্দশাস্ত্র° ।

ফিরিস্তিনামুপকারার্থ° ।

ক্রিয়তে হালাদঙ্গৌজী ।

Halhed's Introduction is interesting on account of his dwelling at some length on the intimate con-

nection between Bengali and Sanskrit. “A Grammar of the pure Bengali dialect,” says he, “cannot be expected to convey a thorough idea of the modern jargon of the Kingdom.” But Sanskrit is “the grand source of Indian Literature,” and he supposes it to be anterior to Egyptian civilisation. Halhed, though writing only a grammar, had his vision of the liberal influence of western culture on Bengal, and while referring to the services of Mr. Wilkins who was the first to prepare a set of Bengali types, remarked on its significance in throwing open the treasures of European literature to a people “already rescued from Asiatic slavery.” “Even the credit of the nation is interested in marking the progress of her conquests by a liberal communication of Arts and Sciences rather than by the effusion of blood : and policy requires that her new subjects should as well feel benefits as the necessity of submission.”

On the practical absence of Bengali prose in his time, Halhed is equally worthy of being quoted :

“I might observe, that Bengal is at present in the same state with Greece before the time of Thucydides ; when poetry was the only style to which authors applied themselves, and studied prose was utterly unknown. Letters of business, petitions, public notifications, and all such other concerns of common life are necessarily, and of course, written without measure or rhythm : I might almost have added, without Grammar. But all the compilations dedicated to Religion, to History and to Morality, and all such works as are expected or intended to survive the composer, are invariably written in

verse; and it is probable no other style will ever be adopted.” It is curious to note how this last prediction has been falsified.

Next to Halhed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the authorities of the College of Fort William turned their attention to the compilation of a grammar and the labours of Rev. Dr. Carey were a landmark which guided later authors as a model. In the appendix, a list is given of the measures, weights and months, etc. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, among his varied interests, also composed a grammar of the Bengali language—*Gaudīya Bhāshār Vyākaran*—but it was mainly intended for western students; the terminology of his grammar takes after the terms current in English books.\*

In 1846 was published John Robinson’s *Vangī-bhāshār Vyākaran*; it was written with a view to supply the want of a good Bengali grammar for the use of native students, but it is interesting to note that it was a translation of Carey’s Grammar; with this difference, however, that a list of “ Dhatoos ” was given in the appendix. “ The necessity of a good Bengalee Grammar for the use of native students has long been felt; and the impetus which the Government of Bengal has given to the study of the language by the establishment of vernacular schools, appears to render such a work still more necessary. This demand, it was presumed, could not be more satisfactorily met than by a translation of the grammar published by the late Rev.

\* *Rāja Rām Mohan Rāyer ingrajite likhita Bānglā Vyākaran.*  
R. C. Bannerji, *The Bhāratvarsha*, Shraban, 1939.

Dr. Carey, for the students of the College of Fort William, with a few additions and alterations. The translator has in every instance endeavoured to simplify the sentences by the use of such terms as appeared most intelligible to the generality of natives. In the preparation of the work, he has received material assistance from two able Pundits, connected with the Serampore Press.' The book contains also a list of Bengali months, days, weights and measures—in the mode of western grammars. It may be remarked in this connection that the attempt to explain matters or facts of the language in a way that would appeal to the native mind, and the co-operation of the Pandits, resulted in bringing the Sanskrit model close to the mind of the learner, so that such compilations served to strengthen the link between the two languages and thus made the new Bengali more Sanskritic than ever. Robinson's Grammar was published in 1846 from Serampore. Next year, in 1847, *Introduction to the Bengali Language*, by Rev. W. Yates, D.D., was published in two volumes, the first of which contained a Grammar, a reader, and explanatory notes with an index and a vocabulary. Next, we may mention *A Grammar of the Bengali Language*, by Duncan Forbes in 1861, in which the author freely availed himself of whatever he found useful and satisfactory in the Grammars of Halhed, Carey, Haughton, Yates, and of an anonymous Pandit who had published a very good book on the subject in 1850 from Calcutta.

It will be seen from the above how far western scholars helped in the writing of books on Bengali grammar, and it may be supposed that since they

were assisted in their task by Indian scholars, they assimilated much that was in use in Sanskrit text-books and the bond between Bengali and Sanskrit was knit, if possible, a little closer still.

The first word-book or vocabulary as we may call it, so far as we know, was compiled by Padre Manoel da Assumçam, the Portuguese missionary referred to before, who had collected a number of Bengali words in use in the locality where he worked—at Bhowal in the Dacca District—with their Portuguese equivalents, for the beginner's use, and he did so, to equip the young missionary sufficiently to discharge his duties. Next, we may mention, "*A vocabulary in two parts, English and Bengalee, and vice versa*," by H. P. Forster, a Senior Merchant in the Bengal Establishment, written in 1794 and "published in 1801," though the copy in the Serampore College Library shows it to have been first edited in 1802. It is clear that the author at least felt that this was a pioneer work, and he said in his introduction to the vocabulary—English to Bengali—"There never having been a native Bengalee Grammarian, nor indeed any author of note (I here speak of the vulgar Bengalee), who might be considered as a standard, the orthography has, consequently, never been fixed." This contains the strongest support to the importance of a dictionary. The first dictionary from Bengali to Bengali was *Shabdasindhu* by Pitambar Mukhopadhyay, a translation of the Sanskrit word-book *Amarakosha*, and it was published in 1809. In 1810, Mohan Prasad Thakur, Assistant Librarian to the College of Fort William, compiled a vocabulary from English to Bengali.

The next work of note is that of Rev. Dr. Carey,\* D.D., "A Dictionary of the Bengalee Language, in which the words are traced to their origin, and their various meanings given." The work is dated 1818, and Dr. Carey acknowledged his debt to Dr. Gilchrist, Dr. Hunter and Mr. Forster. It is remarkable that Rev. Dr. Carey paid a tribute to the comparative purity of the Bengali speech; he said, "The common people in Bengal.....do not so frequently violate the rules of Grammar as might be imagined. They are, it is acknowledged, ignorant of many refined modes of expression, and, as may be expected, rustic in their conversation; but they appear to surpass many other nations in correctness." It is also worth observation that he stuck to Sanskrit roots and models as the source of the Bengali language, and we find this idea in his preface dated 1818:—

"The Bengali language, of which the following is a Dictionary, is almost entirely derived from the Sanskrit; considerably more than three-fourths of the words are pure Sungskrita, and those composing the greatest part of the remainder are so little corrupted, that their origin may be traced without difficulty."

Sir Graves Haughton's and Ram Kamal Sen's works are other landmarks in the history of Bengali dictionaries. The latter composed his dictionary in English and Bengali in two volumes, but though the work was ready by 1817 it was published from the

\* "Carey based his famous Dictionary of the Bengali Language (1815-1825), the source of all dictionaries of later times, on Forster's Dictionary."—Dr. S. K. De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 89.

Serampore Press in 1834. The author was also the " Native Secretary " to the " Asiatic, and Agricultural and Horticultural Societies ; " the book was dedicated to Lord William Cavendish Bentinck. In the dedication, the author said he undertook the task solely to facilitate Native education, to promote the public good, and what is more important from our point of view,—to diffuse " the literature of the west among the natives of India." He noticed that the dictionaries that had appeared before his time were vocabularies rather than dictionaries, calculated to serve the purpose of students rather than general readers and " containing only those words (but without their synonyms) which are constantly in use in the course of business and in common conversation." The book was translated from Todd's edition of Johnson's English Dictionary and contained about 60,000 words. Rev. W. Yates, D.D., appended a vocabulary to his *Introduction to the Bengali Language* in the first volume, 1847. Mendies' *Dictionary, Bengali-English*, the first edition of which was published in 1851, was a far more ambitious work; it was based on an Abridgment of Johnson's Dictionary in English and Bengali, and compiled for the benefit of both European and Native students in acquiring their respective languages. Bengali dictionaries, like *Shabdāmbudhi* (1853) by the Editor of *Samvād-Pūrnachandrodaya*, *Shabdāsāra* (1860) by Girish Chandra Vidyaratna, based on Dr. Wilson's work, and *Shabdārthaprakāshikā* (1863) by Keshab Chandra Ray Karmanar, followed, and it is a legitimate inference to say that they had been inspired by English models already in existence.

Very little work has been done in Philology through the medium of the Bengali language. So far as philological discussions in general are concerned, as published in the *Vangīya Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā* or in other journals or in book form, it is the west that has given the lead to its study. There is no doubt, however, that academical philological discussions have very little connection with the general form of the language. But the interest in Bengali Philology may be traced to Sir George A. Grierson who was a diligent worker in the field and collected specimens from different districts for study and discussion. The works of Rabindra Nath, Ramendra Sundar and Jogesh Chandra show very little direct influence of western philologists. The first English Grammarians adopted technical terms like Ach Sandhi (অচ্ সন্ধি), Hal Sandhi (হল্ সন্ধি), and a list of Sanskrit Dhatus or roots was generally appended. What is more important is that the pioneers were conscious that they had been fixing the orthography for the first time. Another feature of the new style of composition, common to prose and verse both, was the practice of using punctuation marks as there might be occasion for it. The first introduction must have been in the nature of an innovation; we find in the translation of the Holy Bible into Bengali from the original,\* an explanation of the mark of interrogation ( ?—যেখানে জিজ্ঞাসা সেখানে এই মত চিহ্ন ), evidently because in use for the first time.

\* *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments, translated from the originals into the Bengali Language, by the Serampore Missionaries, Vol. IV, containing the Prophetical Books, Serampore: Printed at the Mission Press, 1805.*



### III. *Biography, Autobiography and History.*

Biographies were certainly known to those times which preceded western influence; Jayananda's *Chaitanya-mangal* and Vrindaban's *Chaitanya-Bhāgavat* was the work of a period immediately after Sri Chaitanya's earthly career was over. This was followed by numerous works on the lines of Vaishnav saints and devotees, e.g., *Advaitamangal*, *Narottamvilās*, etc. But such biographies were in verse; they were digressive, and they abounded in philosophical disputations, citing copious authorities from the *Bhāgavat* and other *Purāns* which lifted them from an essentially human interest. They were also more imaginative than historical. Thus, apart from the question of medium, prose or verse, there were other differences in form which can by no means be neglected or left out of consideration. With the dawn of the nineteenth century we find two notable attempts at biographical literature, *Krishnachandra-charit* and *Pratāpāditya-charit*, which were made under the auspices of the College of Fort William to supply learners with materials for the study of the language. It is significant that both the heroes were lay and historical figures. The latter book was published in 1800 by Ram Basu while the former came out in 1808 and was composed by Rajib Lochan. *Krishnachandra-charit* survived the general ruin or obloquy which overtook so many of the books written at this stage and was one of the first books to be prescribed by the Calcutta University for its examinations. From this time down to the appearance on the field of Rajani Kanta Gupta,

there had been numerous attempts in this direction, for the biography was a potent weapon for propaganda in the hands of the educationist. Notable was the appearance of the *Jīvan-charit* (জীবনচরিত) published in 1849 and containing sketches of the lives of Galileo, Newton, Herschel, Grotius, Linnæus, Duval, Thomas Jenkins and Sir William Jones. What a great hold the book had on the rising generations is admirably told in the autobiography of D. N. Das, which is named *Pāgaler Kathā*, in which the brilliant author recounts his own experience :—

ঐ সময়ে জীবনচরিত নামে একখানা বই বাহির হইয়াছিল, উহা আমার সকলের অপেক্ষা অধিক ভাল লাগিত। ঐ পুস্তকে নানা দেশের প্রসিদ্ধ বীর ও বিখ্যাত লোকের বৃত্তান্ত লেখা আছে, আমি সেই জীবনীগুলি অতি যত্নের সহিত পড়িতাম। শিবজী, রামমোহন রায়, হানিবল, নেপোলিয়ন, টেল, পিট, ওয়াশিংটন প্রভৃতি মহাত্মাদের অলৌকিক ক্রিয়াসমূহ পড়িতে আমার যে কি পর্য্যন্ত আনন্দ হইত, তাহা বলিতে পারি না। নার্টক, গল্প ছাড়িয়া ঐ জীবনচরিত খানি বার বার পড়িলাম। আমার এখন মনে হয় যে, ঐ বীর পুরুষদের কাহিনীর পুনঃ পুনঃ পাঠে আমার মন সতেজ ও সবল, হৃদয় সাহসী ও উৎসাহী, আর চরিত্র অভিমानी ও অদম্য হইয়াছিল। পরের প্রভুত্ব ও শাসনের বিষম বিদ্রোহী হইয়া দাঁড়ালাম, আর চিরজীবনের মত নিজের স্বথের মূলে কাঁটা পুঁতিলাম।

—পাগলের কথা, ১২ পৃঃ। \*

\* " In those days there appeared a book named *Jīvan-charit* which pleased me most of all. In that book is written the stories of great heroes and famous men of many countries; I read those lives with great care. Sivaji, Ram Mohan Ray, Hannibal, Napoleon, Tell, Pitt, Washington—when I read the superhuman exploits of these great men, I felt so much joy that I cannot describe it. I read that *Jīvan-charit* again and again, leaving aside dramas and stories. I now

The biographical literature of the nineteenth century Bengal is quite rich in content and wide in range. Accounts of the lives of many Europeans and Americans were better known and appreciated at first; there are lives of Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Parker and other celebrities, composed in Bengali. In 1860 the life of Sivaji was brought out by the Vernacular Literature Committee: the Committee had published the life of William Tell of Switzerland three years before. But it is interesting to notice in this connection that a time came when such biographies of foreigners were received with disfavour; as we find Akshay Chandra Sarkar writing in his preface to a biography of Harish Chandra Mookherjee published in 1877, that the time had come when *বলেটিন জামিরে ডুবাল* should be given up and our attention drawn to the lives of Indians. The right of the Indians to biographical accounts in Bengali came gradually to be acknowledged, and in books like *প্রাচীন-স্মরণীয় চরিতমালা*, by Jogendra Nath Bandyopadhyay Vidyabhushan, and undertaken at the suggestion offered by Bhudeb Mookherjee, lives of Westerners and Indians are to be found in close juxtaposition. Such books are full of exhortations to Indians to emulate those distinguished men whose lives are described, and the exhortations occur both in the body of the book and also in the concluding portions. *Charitāshtak* by Kalimay Ghatak was

feel that repeated readings of those great men's adventures made my mind strong and spirited, my heart bold and enthusiastic, my character sensitive and unyielding. I turned to be a violent hater of other people's mastery and rule, and thus planted a thorn at the root of my happiness for all my life."

inspired by Bhudeb and contained lives of eight distinguished Bengalis. It was meant to counteract the evil effects of Vidyasagar's *Charitāvali*.

Later, however, the biographical literature came to be divested of such exhortations and to be planned with restraint and with a more ambitious and serious aim, in a more restrained style. The beginnings may be placed as early as the year 1875 when Rajani Kanta Gupta's *Jayadev-charit* came out. The author's remarks in the *upasamhār* \* (pp. 55-61, second edition) are directed against the engrossing interest which works of fiction rouse in his countrymen and he requests them to take a keener interest in the lives of their distinguished compatriots, asserting that the authors in Bengal had been, in the past, servants of Imagination or Poesy and were not in the least anxious to know what reality was. This remark is more in consonance with learned and historical treatment, and displays a tendency to criticise available materials.

\* The first two paragraphs are worth quoting :

ভারতবর্ষীয় ভাষায় ভারতবর্ষের প্রকৃত পুরাবৃত্ত পাওয়া বেকুশ দুর্ঘট, ভারতবর্ষীয়-গণের জীবন-চরিত সংগ্রহ করাও সেইরূপ কষ্ট-সাধ্য। আমাদের দেশের প্রসিদ্ধ ব্যক্তিদিগের একখানিও উৎকৃষ্ট জীবন-চরিত নাই বলিলে অত্যাুক্তি-দোষে দূষিত হয় না। দুর্ভাগ্যপ্রযুক্ত অন্তর্দেশে প্রকৃষ্ট পদ্ধতি-ক্রমে জীবন-চরিত-সংগ্রহ-প্রথা প্রচলিত ছিল না। হুতরাং তৎসম্বন্ধীয় সমুদয় বিষয় কিংবদন্তী ও উপাখ্যান-মাত্রে পর্যাবসিত হইয়াছে।

কবিতাদেবীর উপাসক হইলে, তদনুচারিণী কল্পনারও আশ্রয় গ্রহণ করিতে হয়। পূর্ব-কালের গ্রন্থকর্তার। কবিরা নিতান্ত আকৃষ্ট থাকাতো কেবল কল্পনা-মূলক অপ্রাকৃত বর্ণনাতেই আসক্ত ছিলেন; হুতরাং ইতিহাসের অনুমোদিত প্রকৃত বিষয় লিপিবদ্ধ করিবার অবসর প্রাপ্ত করেন নাই। ইতিবৃত্তের উপকরণ হানীয় যাহা কিছু ছিল, তাহাও উপর্যুপরি বিপ্লববশতঃ বিধ্বস্ত ও ইতস্ততঃ বিক্লিপ্ত হইয়াছে। এই জন্যই ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাস ও ভারতবর্ষীয়গণের জীবন-বৃত্তান্তের নিতান্ত অভাব দৃষ্ট হয়।

“ The compilation of lives of Indians is as difficult as to come across an account of Indian antiquities in an Indian language. It is no exaggeration to say that there is hardly a good biography of the great men of our country. Unfortunately, it was not the practice in our country to compile biographies according to the best method, therefore all matters relating to them have ended in rumours and fiction.

“ A devotee of the Goddess of Poesy has to offer worship also to her companion, Imagination. The ancient authors, much attracted to Poesy, were prone only to descriptions, unreal and fanciful, so they had no time to record facts approved by history. What was there of materials for history has been ruined and scattered here and there by repeated revolutions. This is why we find an extreme lack of Indian history and of biographies of Indians.”

The best work in this line was, however, the life of Michael Madhu Sudan Datta by Jogindra Nath Basu in 1888, a work, well-documented, comprehensive and critical. *Rām Tanu Lāhirī o tatkālīn Banga-samāj*, by Siva Nath Sastri was another biography written on a similar plan.

The autobiography is not altogether a new form in Bengali; for *Karachās* are, practically speaking, travel diaries, autobiographical reminiscences conveyed in that form, and Govinda Dasa's *Karachā* is one of the important historical works on the life of Chaitanya. What the English or western influence did was to apply the newly fashionable prose to such writings and thus we have a number of diaries and autobiographies in Bengali

prose in the nineteenth century, though it is quite possible that notable autobiographies composed in English and other western languages had really some share in moulding similar works in Bengali literature. Among the autobiographies in Bengali, we should mention those of Keshab Chandra Sen, Raj Narayan Basu and D. N. Das; the last, a Cambridge graduate, 1857-1900, wrote his own life about 1888 but the publication was posthumous because he would not publish it in his life-time. The book is necessarily incomplete, as all autobiographies are,—and consists of seventeen chapters which still retain their interest for the reader. One of the greatest, if not the greatest, in the line is Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore's *Autobiography*, in which he chronicles important changes in his relatively uneventful career, from his 18th to his 41st year,—dawning of a new consciousness, the beauties of the Himalayan grandeur, all finding adequate representation in his surprisingly simple style. This book, remarkable both for style and contents, was published in 1898. Earlier in the field had been Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's fragments of an autobiography which he had planned and begun but did not live to complete or to continue and after writing only two chapters he died. The first edition was brought out in 1891 by his son Narayan Chandra Bandyopadhyay. In recent years, on the threshold of the twentieth century, we come across the more ambitious and detailed work of the poet Nabin Chandra Sen who intersperses the narrative of his own life with mottoes sometimes taken from English poets. Tagore's memoirs—*Jivan-smriti* and *Chhinna-patra*—remain

classical works in the field. Siva Nath Sastri's *Atmacharit* is remarkable as a store-house of information and as a candid human document.

The greatest want was felt in the department of history and the new writers took immediate steps to remove it. As soon as the College of Fort William began to issue its publications, undertaken for the foreign students of the language and literature of the province, history was among the subjects treated, and books like Mrittunjay Vidyalkar's *Rājārālī* (1804) were works which were once widely read. The Calcutta School Book Society sponsored some attempts—Mr. Felix Carey's Bengali translation of Goldsmith's *History of England*, Tara Chand Datta's *Manoranjan Itihās*, and *Upadeshakathā* translated from Stretch's *Beauties of History*. As early as 1848, Vidyasagar wrote *Bānglār Itihās*, a translation from Marshman. About 1865 there was a *History of China* in Bengali by Kristo Dhone Banerji, dedicated to Jatindra Mohan Tagore,—which was suitable for vernacular schools and which aimed at being a careful abstract of the political history of China with interesting chapters on the manners, customs and social conditions of her people. Bhudeb's *History of England*, written in Bengali, has been translated into other Indian vernaculars and is still used in schools in Bengal and outside. His sketches of the history of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Judaea, Persia, Greece and Rome which appeared under the name of *Purāvrīta-sār* show the range of historical enquiry among the educated men of the period in which he lived. His history of Bengal (1830-1867), written in Bengali, broke new ground by dwelling at length

on the social and economic condition of the people, in addition to the chronicling of political changes. Tod's *Rajasthan*, translated later, was both a model and an inspiration, and the source of many a poetic lay, of many a historical novel and drama, is to be found there. It was greatly through the influence of this book that the history of the Rajputs became so popular in Bengal.

#### IV. *Essays.*

If we remember that the first memorable impetus to the composition, printing and publication of books in the vernacular came from the teachers and students of the College of Fort William, it will be possible for us to appreciate to a certain extent the range of western influence even at that early stage. The English civilians who studied there in order to be acquainted with the language of the people of the country were required to write freely and speak freely in the language or languages which they sought to learn. They had already an acquaintance, more or less wide, with the prose works of their own language, and their influence, it may be reasonably supposed, spread through their mode of writing. The teachers who had been appointed required text-books for use in their class. All this prepared the way for the prose essays. The same motive is discernible here as in the case of history.

Some of the first prose compositions were due to the activity of the Christian Missionaries. They tried to propagate the Christian faith by giving publicity to numerous tracts for the edification of



the people and they had to meet attacks and counter-attacks, for literary parry and thrust was then in fashion. The controversies which raged between the Christian Missionaries on one side and Raja Ram Mohan on the other were carried on, in the form of religious essays, in which the doctrines of the different religions were duly set forth. In 1815 Ram Mohan wrote and published his essay or commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra*. In spite of orthodox opposition to his task there was a long and bitter controversy between a member of the Serampore group of missionaries and the Raja, in the *Sumāchār-Chundrikā* and the *Brahmin Magazine* created solely for this purpose. The earliest dissertation on religion written in Bengali under western influence must have been a book on the *Catechism of the Christian Doctrine* written by Don Antonio,\* the son of the King of Busna; this book was translated by Padre Manoel da Assumpçam already referred to.

The scientific essay or treatise was not long in coming and entered into literature sometime between 1820 and 1840. Thus were written various prose works in the form of an essay or treatise. The educational and cultural societies that had been started for the spread of learning were active and many European writers continued to write for schools and also for the people—Marshman, Carey, Robinson, Yates, Robert May, Pearson are names worth remembering for their work in this connection. The very titles of the books will tell their own

\* *Bengal, Past and Present*, 1916.

tale—কিমিয়া বিজ্ঞান সার, ঐক্যজালের ইতিহাস, পদার্থবিজ্ঞান, জ্যোতির্বিজ্ঞান যুবলোকের শিক্ষার্থে, ব্যবচ্ছেদ বিজ্ঞান, জ্যোতিষ গোলাধ্যায়. Many of these treatises were translations from English to Bengali; almost all of them had their source in religious or educational activity. A general series on the benefits of science requires to be mentioned here; it is *Vijnān-Sevadhi*. Lord Brougham's treatise on the objects, advantages, and pleasures of science was translated into Bengali in the first number in 1832. The title page reads thus :

বিজ্ঞানসেবধি অর্থাৎ শিল্প শাস্ত্রের নিধি লর্ড ব্রোহেম সাহেবের  
লিখিত বিজ্ঞানশাস্ত্রের অভিপ্রায় ও ফল এবং সম্ভোষাদির বিবরণ ইহাতে  
ত্রীযুত এইচ এইচ উইলসন সাহেবের আদেশে ত্রীযুত বাবু অমলচন্দ্র গাঙ্গুলি  
ও কানীপ্রসাদ ঘোষ দ্বারা ভাষান্তর হয় ইউরোপীয় সকল বিজ্ঞানশাস্ত্র  
ভাষান্তরার্থে সমাজ কর্তৃক শোধিত হইয়া প্রকাশিত হইল।

We do not know any other activities of this Samaj. The efforts of Akshay Kumar in this direction published in the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* helped considerably to "Indianize European Science." Akshay Kumar's *Bāhya bastur sahit mānab prakritir sam-bandha vichār* (1851), though not a literal translation of George Coombe's *Constitution of Man*, was based on it; the illustrations only were selected with a view to the Indian public, the argument was taken from the English book. The book refers to the rapid improvements in Europe as regards science, and gives a list of Bengali equivalents of many scientific terms current in English literature.\*

\* Some of these are : "কালানুভাবকতা—Faculty of Time, আকারানুভাবকতা—Faculty of Form, মপত্যসেহ—Philoprogenitiveness, সৌভানুভাবকতা—Ideality, শারীরিক—Organic."

Akshay Kumar published an article in the *Patrikā* (in 1843, Kartik),—based on Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. His speeches and writings were marked by a passionate appeal for culture through the medium of the vernacular as in his speech on the occasion of opening a Tattvabodhini Pathshala at Bansberia, Hughli,\* on the 18th Vaishakh, 1843, for the teaching of science and theology through the vernacular. He was followed by a host of other writers who wrote on physics, chemistry and Algebra in Bengali. Notable are the names of *Tattrārālī*, by Mathura Nath Burman, printed in 1860 by the Brahmo Samaj press and treating of the general properties of matter (বিস্তৃতি, আকৃতি, সচ্ছিদ্রতা, সঙ্কোচ্যতা etc.), *Vij-ganit* by Prasanna Kumar Sarbadhikari in 1873 written ten years before and suggested by Vidya-sagar (using technical terms like মূল্যকর্ষণ, চরণী for surds, সূচকবাদ for indices) and *Raṣāyaner Upakramanikā* or an introduction to chemistry by Bipin Bihari Das in 1877.

The religious and scientific essays of Ram Mohan and Akshay Kumar were not so much

\* এইক্ষণে যদিও কলিকাতা নগরস্থ এবং তাহার নিকটস্থ কতিপয় গ্রামবাসী অনেক যুবক ইংরাজী ভাষায় বিদ্যা শিক্ষা করিতেছেন, তথাপি ইহার স্বার্থিতের প্রতি বিশ্বাস করা যাইতে পারে না, যেহেতু ইংরাজী বিদেশীয় লোকের ভাষা, সুতরাং তাহার। যদি দৈবাৎ এদেশ হইতে বিয়ল হইল তবে কোন্ ব্যক্তি আর ইংরাজী শিক্ষা করিবেক? এবং স্বদেশীয় ভাষায় গ্রন্থ এবং উপদেশকের অভাব সত্ত্বে কোন্ ব্যক্তি আর জ্ঞান অন্বেষণ করিতে শক্ত হইবেক?.....আমরা পরের শাসনের অধীন রহিতেছি, পরের ভাষায় শিক্ষিত হইতেছি, পরের অত্যাচার সহ্য করিতেছি, এবং খ্রীষ্টীয়ান ধর্মের যেকোন প্রাদুর্ভাব হইতেছে তাহাতে শঙ্কা হয় কি জানি পরের ধর্ম বা এদেশের ভাষায় ধর্ম হয়।—তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা, ১লা আশ্বিন, ১৭৩৫ শক।

characterised by a literary flavour as those of Bankim and Bhudeb who wrote for the lay public ; their writings were easy to follow, stimulating and instructive—the lightness of touch in Bankim was an additional charm, which may be found even in his immediate followers, Chandra Nath and Thakur Das ; while the writings of Kali Prasanna Ghosh display an eloquence hard to match. These are the main writers whose influence was transmitted to others and thus the essay became in course of time an integral element in Bengali literature.

It is interesting to note that Bacon's Essays were translated and their Bengali version, *Prabandhāvalī* প্রবন্ধাবলী, by Dharmadas Adhicary, was published in 1874 ; that a book *Dhana-vidhān* or easy lessons on money matters was translated by Gopal Chandra Datta in 1862 ; and that the first book on natural theology was written in 1860 by Nobin Kristo Banerjee, and based on the plan of Paley, whose *Natural Theology* and *Evidences of Christianity* are books that still live in the history of English literature. Herbert Spencer's *Education* was translated and edited by Shyam Lal Goswami ; the second edition of the book is dated 1298 B.S. The English philosopher was, however, known in Bengal much earlier, and we find a book *Shikshā-vichār* written by Jadu Nath Ray and dated 1870, which was based on Spencer's essay.

A special remark is necessary on essays on literary criticism where English models were to be met with frequently. Reference may be made to a remark in the *Bhāratī*, Phalgun issue, 1879—" In

these days there is a great stir in literary circles over Kalidas and Shakespeare"—“আজকাল কালিদাস ও শেক্সপীয়ার লইয়া সাহিত্যসমাজে হুলস্থূল পড়িয়াছে।” Again, there was a widespread opinion in the days of the *Bangadarshan*—that there should be a society for regulating the language and style of Bengali literature, and literary criticism should follow western ideals and models. “বাল্লালা সাহিত্যের ভাষা ও রীতিসংস্থাপনী সভা চাই এবং ইউরোপীয় আদর্শ অনুসারে এবং তদ্রূপ যোগ্যতানুসারে সমালোচনা করা হউক।” The climax was reached, perhaps, when in 1288 B.S. the *Bāndhav*, in reviewing a drama—the *Pāshān-pratimā*, wrote—“The hero of this drama is as lewd as Don Juan, as proud as Bobadil or Falstaff, as forgetful as Hamlet.”

#### V. Journalistic Literature.

It is not very difficult to trace the extensive output of journalistic literature in Bengal to the influence of western culture, but it is proper to examine and make a detailed enquiry into western influence exclusively on the form of this particular literary variety. There have been papers run by educated Bengalis through the medium of English and received with welcome and confidence by all sections of the people, *e.g.*, the *Hindu Patriot*, the *Bengalee*, the *Patrika* and the *Indian Mirror*, but these are at best indirectly connected with our subject. We are more concerned about the Bengali journals—dailies, weeklies and monthlies—and specially their forms as they were evolved through the contact of western or rather English models.

This leads us to a historical consideration of journalistic literature in general in Bengal.

The earlier years were characterised by a complete lack of newspapers, but some suggestion has been put forward about the existence of a State Intelligence Department under the Mughal Empire, which ceased with its disruption. There were also many newspapers in manuscript run by private agencies. These *ākhhbars* did quite a good deal of mischief during Col. Sir William Sleeman's enquiry into the Thuggee system in Oudh (1849-50), as well as during the Sepoy troubles of 1858.\* But such papers, presumably, had been in some other vernacular than Bengali, and in other provinces than Bengal.

Hickey's *Bengal Gazette* commenced on the 29th January, 1780. It was the first printed newspaper in India. Its novelty was appreciated but the authorities looked askance at what might some day become a dangerous weapon for preaching sedition. William Douane, editor of the *Indian World* in 1794, was cavalierly treated for his criticisms as may be found on reference to the *Calcutta Review*, 1876.

Other papers conducted in English and under European management, fared equally ill and 1799 saw the first legislation curbing the power of the press.

It has been now proved that the *Bāngāl Gejet* was the first Bengali periodical and was started in 1816 under the editorship of Ganga Kishore Bhattacharyya, who worked in the press attached to the Serampore Mission. It has been referred to in later

\* *Calcutta Review*, 1876.

periodicals as the first Bengali newspaper,\* and beyond all doubt. We may start next with the *Dik-darshan*, under the management of the Serampore group of Missionaries ; it was meant to reassure Government officials that the innovation would be perfectly safe, and it might thus be described as a feeler. We note that this paper, which was monthly and the first of its kind, lived on from April, 1818 to February, 1821, and it was widely advertised in the Calcutta papers. It was based on Penny and Saturday Magazines current in England. When assured by the authorities of their protection to such ventures, the Missionaries began their first weekly paper—the *Sumāchār-Durpan*, of which the first number appeared on Saturday the 23rd May, 1818. It should be noted that many pandits, or Bengali scholars proficient in Sanskrit, took a prominent part in the editing and management of the *Durpan*. This was followed by many newspapers both in English and in Bengali, and the *Samvād-kaumudī*, a weekly, was started in December, 1821. Ram Mohan Ray was the *de facto* editor of the paper in its earlier stage. The *Sumāchār Chundrikā* followed, on 5th March, 1822, as a weekly, and under the editorship of Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyay, tried to rally orthodox opinion against Ram Mohan Ray's plans of social reform. The *Gospel Magazine* was printed in a bilingual form by Baptist Auxiliary Missionary Society in 1819 and one Krishna Mohan Das issued a weekly, the *Samvāda-timira-nāshak*, in order to combat the views expressed in the Christian paper, and the new organ was distinctly pro-Hindu

\* *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya-Parishat Patrikā*, 1338 B.S., pp. 178-181.

in tone. It is necessary to recall to our mind that many periodicals, like the *Jnānānveshan*, managed by the old boys of the Hindu College, were inspired by Derozio's teaching and insistence on the necessity of the exercise of reason\* in forming judgments and estimates of things in general. The *Jnānānveshan* was started in June, 1831, and among the reasons to which its appearance was due was that the pioneers thought it proper to spread and circulate the knowledge of geography and other branches of learning in Bengal. Since 1833 it began to reappear with an additional English edition. It ran for about ten years and then died of inanition in November, 1840. It is not necessary to mention and describe all the papers that flourished for a long time or merely for a short interval in Bengal, but the *Samvād-Prabhākar* which began in 1831 requires special mention for the intrinsic importance of Iswar Gupta's contributions which appeared in it, sometimes in a pithy and colloquial style, sometimes decked out in flowery grandeur, displaying the extreme extravagances of Sanskrit rhetorical practice. In the next decade, the *Tattva-bodhinī Patrikā* rendered yeoman's service by its attempts to "Indianise European Science," as has been remarked more than once, and in form it sought to be a little more varied. The Bengal Miscellany or *Sārārtha-Samgraha* next

\* To quote from Dr. Duff—"There suddenly appeared a thick crop of ephemeral publications, in the form of weekly newspapers, about the size of a quarter sheet. The burst of desire for unlimited freedom of utterance through the Press, seemed, if possible, to exceed the raging mania for oral discussion."



deserves mention ; it was started in 1866 as a journal of literature, romance and useful information, planned on the model of such English papers as the *Leisure Hour*, Cassell's *Family Paper*, and similar serials. A reference is also necessary to the *Encyclopædia Bengalensis*, or the *Vidyākālpadrum*, though it verged more on permanent and useful compilations than is usual with a periodical of ephemeral interest. " The Editor cannot determine at present how many numbers are to be published yearly ;" this statement which appeared in the prospectus of the serial should, however, be taken into account in regarding it as in the nature of a periodical with seriousness of purpose in detailing moral tales and legends, history of Rome and stories of voyages and travels to its readers.

The *Vividhārtha Samgraha* of 1851 or the penny magazine belonging to the Vernacular Literature Society was edited by Rajendra Lala Mitra, the great Bengali antiquarian. It had a circulation, we are given to understand,\* of 900 copies, and, beside 3 or 4 pictorial illustrations in each number, contained articles of different varieties, historical, biographical, etc. The *Sahacharī*, *Māsik Patrikā*, *Bāmābodhinī* were papers specially intended for women. The *Bangadarshan* in its foreword as published in the very first issue (1873) declares its policy of bridging the gulf between the two sections of the Bengali community—those who are educated in the new fashion, in the western system, and

\* *Calcutta Review*, 1853.

those who are not, and counteracting the anglicisation of the educated community.\* In detailing forth its ideals and aspirations, and in sketching its programme, it is quite modern in tone. The *Āryya-darshan*, *Bāndhar*, *Prachār*, *Navajīvan*, *Sādhārānī* were papers valued in their day and called into being to counteract somehow or other the westernisation, the anglicisation, of the people and were in a manner products of its influence. They were edited by Jogendra Nath, Kali Prasanna, Bankim Chandra and Akshay Chandra who were among the leading thinkers of the times. They have left a permanent impress on Bengali literature.

It may be suggested that later magazines have more or less been modelled on and developed from the *Bangadarshan* with suitable changes as necessitated by the occasion.

To the year 1873 belongs another monthly magazine, the *Vasantak*, published by Hari Singh, which is of interest to us as it had been modelled on the *Punch* and criticised western fashions at the same time that it was a bitter critic of the Government's attitude. It freely abused Bankim Chandra and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, ridiculed Calcutta as *Kālikāvatī*. It spared neither Bhudeb nor the progressive Brahmo; advertised the *Rājā* title as on sale to the highest bidder; applied the fable of the bull and the frog to Vidyasagar and the *Bangadarshan* respectively. The sting of satire was driven home by means of wood-cut blocks, but some of the pictures were more serious in design, like the flower-pot of India before the altar of the world. The *Punch* influenced Indian journalism through

another paper, the *Harabolā Bhār*, the advertisement of which ran as follows.\*—

The Indian Punch.

হরবোলা ভাড় ।

ইংরাজী বাঙ্গালা রহস্ত । বার্ষিক অগ্রিম মূল্য ৫ টাকা, ডাকমাণ্ডল আট আনা । কলিকাতা প্রভাকর চন্দ্র শ্রীযুক্ত কেদার নাথ রায়ের নিকট এবং কলুটোলা শোভারাম বসাকের গলি ৩১ নং বাটীতে শ্রীযুক্ত দুর্গাদাস ধরের নিকট মাসে মাসে প্রাপ্য ।

## VI. Fiction.†

There is a fragment of a short story in prose—গল্প গল্প—on an episode in the life of Maharaja Vikramaditya—an early specimen of story writing before British influence, important and interesting because it points to the existence of an instinct to tell stories in prose, which would have, sooner or later, found an outlet.‡ An interesting case is presented in a volume of short stories, by Brajanath Barjena, named *Chatura-vinoda* in Oriya literature, which was wholly spontaneous and in no way prompted by western influence. The pioneers in the College of Fort William made similar attempts of which the *Vatrish Sinhāsan* and the *Totā Itihās* are appropriate examples. *Anecdotes of Virtue and Valour* published from Serampore in 1829 and containing 95 short prose sketches has in it the making of short stories. The colloquies appended to Dr. Carey's Grammar pointed to the

\* The *Hindu Patriot*, March 2, 1874.

† For a more detailed treatment, see *Western Influence in Bengali Novel*, by Sen, Journal of the Department of Letters, Vol. XXII, Calcutta University.

‡ *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya-Parishat Patrikā*, 1929 B.S., Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's article—ব্রিটিশ মিউজিয়মে স্তম্ভকগুলি কাগজপত্র .

potential capacity of the language; *মাইয়া কন্দল*, *তিয়রিয়া কথী*, *খাতক মহাজন* are suggestive dialogues, showing an interest in common life and making the prose style a fit vehicle for ordinary narratives and dramatic sentiments. All these show the possibilities in the literature for the new form.

A remarkable series of translations from English and other western languages to Bengali next arrests our attention. In 1835, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was translated into Bengali by the Calcutta Tract and Christian Book Society, and called *যাত্রিকের যাত্রার বিবরণ অর্থাৎ ইহলোক হইতে পরলোক গমনের বিবরণ*; in 1836, we have a Bengali rendering of *Rasselas* by Raja Kali Krishna; in 1837, the life of Daniel with a Bengali translation. In 1846, *Bible Stories* was translated from the German of Dr. C. G. Barth by Mrs. Haeberlin. In 1849, *Romeo and Juliet*—the first of the great dramatist's stories to be thus translated—was done into Bengali by Gurudas Hazra from Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. In this connection we may also mention *ফুলমণি ও করুণার বিবরণ*, an imaginary sketch of two Christian girls for the glorification of the Christian faith. Some imaginative essays bordering on fiction proper but with an allegorical significance were translated by Akshay Kumar, e.g., his *Scapna-Darshan* was a rendering of Addison's *Vision of Mirza* in the *Tatler*, published in *Agrahayan* and *Magh* issues of the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, 1771 saka—corresponding to 1849-1850.

It is, however, in the latter half of the nineteenth century that we come across more energetic and successful attempts. The Vernacular Literature

Society, which, backed more or less by Government support, had its sphere and period of usefulness and public service, took a leading part in preparing the way for the Bengali fiction by undertaking to translate many stories from English literature, though its activities were by no means confined to it but embraced Sanskrit literature as well. Thus, to name some of its publications, *Robinson Crusoe* was translated in 1853, *Lamb's Tales* (only nine stories), পাল ও বর্জিনিয়া in 1856, পুত্রশোকাতুরা দুঃখিনী মাতা in 1857, বায়চতুষ্টয়ের আখ্যায়িকা, বিচার and এলিজিবেথ in 1858. Some very popular female characters fashionable in the novels of those days were known to have been modelled on Miss Edgeworth's novels\* whose *Murad the Unlucky*, by the way, was freely translated by Jadu Gopal Chatterji.

Novel-writing in Bengali must have received an impetus from social reformers or rather from the impulse of social reform, and two offers† may be noticed here. Jay Kissen Mookherji of Uttarpara declared a prize of Rs. 500 for a novel in Bengali or English on the "Social and domestic life of the rural population and working classes of Bengal."‡ The Viceroy also offered a prize of Rs. 500 "for the best Bengali tale or novel illustrating the social and domestic life of the Hindu."‡

It is not to be supposed that there were no other literary ideals or forms before the Bengali language for adoption in fiction. From 1840 onwards we get a number of prose stories translated from

\* "The character of Sushila takes after the best female characters in the novels of Miss Edgeworth."—*Calcutta Review*, Vol. 32, 1859.

† The *Hindu Patriot*, February 6, 1871.

‡ *Ibid*, April 24, 1871.

Sanskrit or some Indian vernacular other than Bengali. Thus there seems to have been a particular vogue of Nala's life; e.g. *Nalopākhyān* in 1855, *Nala-charit-kāvya* in 1860. Sanskrit epics and plays were equally laid under contribution. What is remarkable in these translations is the evidence of a critical and discriminating spirit which would leave out what was false and absurd and hold on to what was real and true. Some of these books, e.g., Ramgati Nyayaratna's *Romāvatī* (1862), are definitely called *Ākhyāyikā*. The defence of the Sanskrit form comes from the able pen of Bhudeb who praises hyperboles, characteristic of Oriental literature as "contributing to the sense of wonder or *adbhuta rasa*; the realities of the universe may seem flat to the sophisticated mind but are full of wonders for the simple soul; hence the *Purāṇs* describe heroes and heroines as not tied to space and time, not creatures of flesh and blood, but with deeper significance which may come out through an allegorical or symbolical interpretation." In spite of this defence, the Sanskrit model failed to capture the imagination of the public, newly roused to a sense of appreciation of the common ranks of humanity, of historical basis, of secular treatment and simplicity in style.

A similar attempt was made on behalf of Arabic, Urdu and Persian tales; these also wanted to set the fashion. Since 1850, a number of translations appeared—the *Arabian Nights*, *Chāhār Darvesh*, the story of *Hātem Tāi*, *Gol Sānubar*, *Gole Bakāyali*, but the outlandish names of heroes and heroines, the unfamiliarity of the places of occurrence situated at a very long distance, abundance of

miracles, the easy and rapid transference of human souls into the bodies of birds and beasts, all these features of such novels or romances were too monstrous, and the attempt failed.

While English stories continued to be translated or adopted, the model of the English novel was also followed in form. The *Vaṅgādhīpa-parājaya* by Pratap Chandra Ghose is a typical example; specially the fourth chapter greatly resembles the tournament scene in "Ivanhoe." The seventeenth chapter of this novel may also be cited as parallel to the episode of storming the castle as told in *Ivanhoe*. In the style of Sir Walter Scott, words are explained in footnotes, specially terms descriptive of a castle. The book was commended as a novel, because it conformed to the standard of novels in nineteenth century England, which ran up to three volumes, "600 pages long" was the space of the book.\* Tekchand's *Alāler Gharer Dulāl* is a picaresque novel in the wake of Fielding's Tom Jones, leaving aside the stamp of western influence in its words and spirit; while the historical novel struck its roots deep into the soil of the Bengali literature through Bankim Chandra's *Durgeshanandinī* and other books, though the author would allow only *Rājasinha* of all his works to be styled "*Aitihāsik Nātak*." He had disclaimed reading *Ivanhoe* before he had written *Durgeshanandinī*,† but the stamp of the form is nevertheless to be seen,

\* *Calcutta Review*, 1870.

† দুর্গেশানন্দিনী লেখার আগে আইভান হো পড়ি নাই।—সাঁধনা, ১৩০১  
—'I did not read *Ivanhoe* before I wrote *Durgeshanandinī*.'—*Sādhana*, 1301 B.S. It is interesting to note that when he had been composing his novels, the works of Sir Walter Scott could be seen on his table;

generally speaking, in all his novels. More specific is the influence of Wilkie Collins in the *Rajanī*, as the author himself observed and acknowledged—

উপাখ্যানের অংশবিশেষ নায়কনায়িকা বিশেষের দ্বারা ব্যক্ত করা, প্রচলিত রচনাপ্রণালীর মধ্যে সচরাচর দেখা যায় না। কিন্তু ইহা নূতন নহে। উইল্কি কলিন্সকৃত “Woman in White” নামক গ্রন্থ

প্রণয়নে ইহা প্রথম ব্যবহৃত হয় :— \* Some of the scenes in the beginning of the *Sitārām* are taken from *Scott's Heart of the Midlothian*. Thus it was through him mainly that the different types of Bengali novels, social, historical and romantic, were introduced under the influence of the west.

It is necessary to add in this connection that, as far as mere form goes *Kamalākānter Daptar* owes much to De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* and that Bhishmadev Khoshnabish seems to be modelled on Scott's Jedediah Cleishbotham, while the idea of the book (*Daptar*) having been left by its old author to somebody else through whom it was published is also taken from Scott's plan in the *Tales of My Landlord*. In addition, there is the element of irrepressible Sam Weller of Dickens in the make-up of Kamalakanta when standing on his trial at the court.

Bankim Chandra's associates in literature—Ramesh Chandra Datta, Chandi Charan Sen and

they were found there by Kali Nath Ray of Majilpur, his office assistant when the novelist was stationed at Baruipur, 24-Perganas, in the earlier part of his literary career. The plot seems to have been suggested by recollection of similar stories told in Bankim Chandra's childhood by his eldest brother from English originals.

\*“ To express particular portions of the novel by individual characters is rarely to be found in the accepted literary code. But this is not new. It was first used in *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins.”



Swarna Kumari Devi went further in assimilating the western influence specially on the historical side, and the learned foot-notes, rich in antiquarian lore, showed Scott's method adopted to a very great extent. Swarna Kumari's *Dīp-nīrṇān* reminds one of *Cymbeline* and suggests the possibility of its being the original, in the stealing of royal princes from the cradles, in their upbringing by a man who has put on a hermit's robe, in the fact of Sailabala and Parvati being disguised as men and overhearing the negotiations of the traitors Vijay Sinha and the Moslem messenger, while sheltered in a cave.

In the *Hindu Patriot* of March, 1871, we find an advertisement of *Āmār Gupta-kathā* in weekly (Sunday) numbers, to be sold at 2 pice each, and the paper to be issued by Nabin Krishna Basu of Shobhabazar. This brings us to another influence on the types of the novel in Bengali.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century there had been a great influx of what might be termed the 'Mystery' novels. There was an illustrated paper, the *Prabāhinī*, in 1882, which started with the idea of rendering into Bengali the *Mysteries of the Court of London*. It refined upon Reynolds, and contained woodcut illustrations.\* *The Adventures of Don Quixote* was also at this time published in Bengali (1883) in serial form and named

\* প্রবাহিনী (সচিত্র) rendered in Bengali from the *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London* অথবা রেগেন্ডন্ কুত রহস্যাবলী অবলম্বনে লিখিত আখ্যায়িকাবলী। প্রথম উচ্ছ্বাস—প্রথম তরঙ্গ।..... শ্রীমগেন্দ্র নাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় কর্তৃক, ৮২ নং বারানসী বোম্বের ষ্ট্রিট হইতে প্রকাশিত। কলিকাতা বঙ্গাব্দ: ১২৮২। মূল্য প্রতি সংখ্যা—এক আনা মাত্র। ১০নং রামনারায়ণ ভট্টাচার্যের লেন, গ্রেট ইন্ডিয়ান প্রেস, শ্রীঅমৃত লাল মুখোপাধ্যায় দ্বারা মুদ্রিত।

*Adbhut Digvijay*. In this connection it may be noted that *Gulliver's Travels* was translated into Bengali and published in 1876 as *Apūrva-deshabhraman*. But the craze was for Reynolds and many volumes were written after him, the pioneer in this line being the author of *Haridāser Gupta-kathā*. The Bengali imitators and translators of such mystery novels were not ignorant men, but presumably they had been quite well-read, familiar with the works of prominent novelists, both in England and on the Continent. Such appears to be the case specially from the spirited defence put up by the translator of the *Young Duchess* in his preface to the Bengali version. The detective serial, *Dārogār Daptar*, started by Priyanath Mukherji, had its form on the model of the English original, though the incidents might have been based on life's experience rather than mere translations. A prominent section of modern fiction, like the *Rahasya Laharī* series, which never lacks readers and supporters in Bengal, and which is to be directly traced to western influence, still supplies the need for sensationalism.

Rabindra Nath had been always sensitive about the ill assortment of foreign forms and foreign spirit, as we find from his review \* of a short novel by the French novelist, Prosper Mérimée, which centres round the idea—বর্ণিত ঘটনা এবং পাত্রগণ বড় বেশী যুরোপীয়—“The persons described and the incidents narrated savour too much of the European.” In the first two novels, the *Bau-thākuranīr Hāt* (1881) and the *Rājarshi* (1885) we find the historical setting after the example of Bankim Chandra or the

\* The *Sādhana*, Vol. I.

author of the *Vanḡādhīpa-Parājaya*, and thus get a trace of western influence, more or less direct. But even here we find an emphasis on changes in men's mood rather than in their environment. In his *Chokher Bāli* (1901) and *Naukā-dubi* (1903) this historic setting is given up, but when we come to the *Gorā* (the *Prabāsī*, 1907) we find some trace of his reading of George Eliot's *Felix Holt* in the outward appearances as well as the character of the hero and Mr. Lyon, and the attitude that the hero observes towards Esther in their first meeting \* at the tea-table. It is difficult to trace any more influence of the west, on his novels, with regard to their form; *Ghare Bāire* or any of his other novels cannot be said to be modelled on western ideals. Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*, however, shows interesting parallels both to the two friends—Gora and Binay—as well as to Sandip who runs very close to Bazarov, the nihilist. Again, there are curious coincidences in form between the poetic sketches in the *Lipikā* (1922) and Turgenev's *Dream Tales and Prose Poems*, e.g., in Rabindra Nath's *Sandhyā o Prabhāt* (p. 17, the *Lipikā*), while the allegorical short story like the *Totār Kathā* has its prototype in English, e.g., in Froude's short stories of this nature, like the *Ox and the Lion*.

It is not possible to trace any western influence in the form of Sarat Chandra Chatterji's novels; he had assimilated earlier writers; he had been fed on the writings of Bankim, and Rabindra Nath; he asserts that he read *Gorā* at least twenty times; this supplies a link no doubt between the

\* *Felix Holt*, Chapter V.

novelists, but Sarat Chandra had also read much that is worth reading in English literature and the result of his miscellaneous studies is partly indicated in his book *Nārīr Mālya*. We have already come to a stage where, though the west still continues to exercise a partial influence on our ideas, it has done what it could to mould the form of the Bengali novel.

### *VII. Conclusion.*

We have in this chapter described western influence in prose forms. We have begun with the technique of the language, and continued our study through the various forms of prose literature—biography and history, essay and periodical literature and fiction—and considered the question in all its possible bearings. It is now time to turn our attention to the consideration of western influence in the literary spirit, the matter and tendencies of Bengali literature.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### Influence on the Matter and Spirit of Literature

#### *I. Introductory.*

We have considered so far the western influence on the prose and verse forms and have also included the drama in our discussion relating to the forms current in Bengali literature, but for a full and comprehensive treatment of this influence on the growth and development of Bengali literature it is but proper for us to include also the matter and spirit of the literature, which are surely not negligible in any account of literary changes, however we might extol the excellence or importance of mere forms from the artistic point of view. We have to consider how far the ideal, rather the outlook of the literature concerned, has changed and grown. This we can ascertain by enquiring into the subjects treated and their treatment in the different forms ; in short, by examining the new ideas. The spirit of literature is certainly a very vague term, but it is to be judged by its manifestations, and if we stick to the contents, the subjects, the ideas that are expressed, it might be suggested that we should not stray very far from what we sought to find. It will be necessary then for our purpose to find out how far there have been changes in the treatment of outward nature, of man, and of the great Hereafter ; in other words, the changes in the attitude to nature, to individual and social man, and to God or religion ; for these are

the main heads under which our thoughts may be grouped. Man, nature and God—these are the topics which take up and exhaust the whole range of literary ideas. Let us consider them one by one.

## II. *Man.*

Man in his individual capacity no longer exists merely for the sake of religion or for the glorification of particular gods and goddesses. When western culture was introduced to Bengal, the question arose of its acceptance or rejection. In order to assimilate it, to adopt it fully or as far as possible, it was necessary to break through convention as laid down by hoary-headed tradition, and in the process there was a conflict. This conflict broke out in man's relation to society, in his social dealings, as well as in his religious practices. Such non-conformity was primarily due to western influence.

The question was—had man the strength necessary to defy society? Man's freedom, his capacity to rise above his immediate surroundings and the opinions and decisions of his circle, received very great emphasis and he was hailed as one without any limit to his powers. An individual being may not be merely an individual, but also a representative being, and has, in addition, infinite strength and infinite capacity to which justice must be done. This new consciousness of strength is a great revelation. In this sense he is an epitome of the Universe, and the Individual stands for, or is transfigured into, the Universal.

The consciousness of this new strength, what man feels himself to be under the influence of such

an idea, is admirably expressed in the oft-quoted lines of Rabindra Nath's *Prabhāt Sangīt* in which the inexhaustible energy of the Individual is described as restlessly striving to find an outlet for its expansion.

জাগিয়া উঠেছে প্রাণ,  
ওরে উথলি উঠেছে বারি,  
ওরে প্রাণের বাসনা প্রাণের আবেগ  
ক্ধিয়া রাখিতে নারি ।  
থর থর করি' কাঁপিছে ভূধর,  
শিলা রাশি রাশি পড়িছে খসে',  
ফুলিয়া ফুলিয়া ফেনিল সলিল  
গরজি উঠিছে দারুণ রোষে ।  
মহা উল্লাসে ছুটিতে চায়,  
ভূধরের হিয়া টুটিতে চায়,  
.....  
প্রভাত কিরণে পাগল হইয়া  
জগৎ-মাঝারে লুটিতে চায় ।

“ The spirit has waked up,  
Oh the water overflows,  
Oh the heart's desire and the heart's emotion  
I cannot hold in check.  
The hill's in a tremble,  
The stones are falling off in lumps,  
The foamy water swells and swells,  
Thundering mighty wrath.

It seeks to run in great glee,  
To break open the mountain's heart,  
To run mad in morning's light,  
To roll about in the midst of the world.”

The whole of the poem is instinct with this idea, the eager outburst of the spring standing for the new consciousness of power in the human soul which would express itself in an avalanche of activity.

The German philosopher Fichte's conception of the ego, of its constant striving to pass beyond its limits, which gave a philosophical explanation to some of the most pronounced impulses of the Romantic Movement in European literature in the nineteenth century, has an interesting parallel in these lines.

It may be pointed out in this connection that the idea in its expression is subtly differentiated from the traditional Hindu view of identifying the individual with the Being that is in the universe, of realising oneself,—that is, from such thought as conveyed in the lines.

অহং দেবো ন চাত্তোহস্মি ব্রহ্মৈবাহং ন শোকভাক্ ।

সচ্চিদানন্দরূপোহং নিত্যশুদ্ধস্বভাববান্ ॥

“ Lord am I, none else ; I am Brahman, not  
subject to sorrow ;

Being, knowing and bliss, these have made  
up my form ; the eternal, the pure,  
I am possessed of my nature.”

It is equally different from the Lord's identifying Himself with all that is best in the world as expressed in the well-known lines of the *Gītā*,  
“ Visva-rūpa-darshana.”

Man feels not merely that he is free from shackles but that he has a more positive quality, life abounding, life pulsating in a full measure, never checked or retarded by any consideration. Such a



life falls in tune with the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's fine strain of music—

আমি মৃগয়, আমি চিগ্নয়,  
 আমি অজর অমর অক্ষয়, আমি অব্যয় !  
 আমি মানব দানব দেবতার ভয়,  
 বিশ্বের আমি চির দুৰ্জয়,  
 জগদীশ্বর-ঈশ্বর আমি পুরুষোত্তম সত্য,  
 আমি তাথিয়া তাথিয়া মথিয়া ফিরি  
 এ স্বর্গ পাতাল মর্ত্য ! \*

“ I am made of the earth, I am made of the spirit,  
 Ageless and deathless, without loss or decay am I !  
 The terror of man, demon and God,  
 I am ever hard for the world to conquer,  
 Lord of God, I am the true chief of men,  
 In a passionate whirl of dance do I circle this  
 Heaven, earth and the lower regions !”

Another factor in the consideration of individual man stands out, his absorbing pre-occupation with himself; no longer does he live in a world peopled by deities of different grades and varieties, where he is always in the background, his existence a mere subordinate matter, but he is now full of thoughts for himself, and questions where he stands and whither he goes. For an illustration of this new trait, a trait which has helped to make the literature more secular than it had been, a reference may be made among numerous other examples to the poem *Lakshya tārā* in the *Ālo o Chhāyā* of Mrs. Kamini Ray, the distinguished poet.



ইউরোপীয়দিগের স্থানে আমরা পারিবারিক কোন ধর্মই প্রকৃতরূপে শিক্ষা করিতে পারি না। \*

“ I have seen with my own eyes Englishmen medically attended and nursed when they fall ill. If the wife of such a one keep a little late, if she does not take her meals in time, then she immediately gains praise.....The practice of the English in the matter of sick-nursing should not be imitated by us. . ....We cannot really learn anything from the Europeans in the matter of family duties.”

Bhudeb was never weary of extolling the ideals and relations in Hindu life as contrasted with those that obtain in the west, and was most careful in critically scrutinising any slavish imitation. Even with regard to the maltreatment of servants by their masters, he says :

বোধ হয়, চাকর মারা রোগটা আমাদের মধ্যে সংক্রামিত হইয়া আসিতেছে। উটী অবৈধ অনুকরণের ফল। ইংরাজ মনিবেরা এদেশীয় চাকরদিগকে মারেন। বাঁহারা সাহেবদিগের সকল কাজই সোণার চক্ষে দেখেন, তাঁহারাও চাকরদিগের মারেন।

“ I am afraid the disease of beating one's servant is getting contagious with us. That is the effect of undue imitation. English masters beat the native servants. Those also beat their servants who look admiringly on all actions of Englishmen.”

It goes without saying, however, that there has been disruption in family life, that the ties have been severely strained in Bengal and elsewhere and the changes have been reflected in literature. It is not only the economic trouble, the bread problem,

that is at the root of the discord.—though that has sometimes been the cause, direct or indirect,—but the old mentality of accommodating others has given way to a new ideal of emphasising and asserting one's individuality, a refusal to allow it to be curbed by other considerations, however strong. For example, in one of his later works, Rabindra Nath points to this disturbance of equilibrium which supplies the key-note to many works of fiction now popular in literature.

এই পরিবারটির মধ্যে কোনও রকমের গোল বাধিবার কোনও সম্ভব কারণ ছিল না—অবস্থাও স্বচ্ছল, মানুষগুলিও কেহ মন্দ নহে, কিন্তু তবুও গোল বাধিল।

“ There was no reasonable ground for complication of any sort in this family—the men were none of them bad, and all of them men of substance, still, there was trouble.” \*

One of the most radical changes that have resulted from the intercourse between the east and the west here in Bengal, has been with regard to the relation between the sexes and that change has been, as is but proper and reasonable, adequately represented in literature. Woman has been invested with a higher personality than she was ever credited with. When the propriety or rather the benefit of early marriage was called in question, Bhudeb championed the orthodox opinion and said :

যাঁহারা বাল্য-বিবাহ-প্রণালীর কেবল দোষ মাত্র দেখেন, ইহার গুণ দেখিতে পান না, তাঁহাদিগকে ইংরাজদিগের নিরবচ্ছিন্ন অনুচিকীর্ষু বলিলে অত্যায্য গালি দেওয়া হয় না। †

\* *Haldār-goshthī*.

† *Pāribārik Prabandha*, First Essay p. 1.

“ Those who are alive only to the evils of early marriage, and are blind to its advantages, may be safely described as constantly striving to ape the English ; that would be no abuse.”

He did not look, moreover, favourably upon the free mixing of people of both sexes as in European society.

যে সমাজে স্ত্রীপুরুষে একত্র সমাবেশ, সকল সময়েই একত্র বসিয়া বাক্যালাপ, একত্র পানভোজন, একত্র পর্যটন, সে সমাজে স্ত্রীলোকদিগের চরিত্র কিছু অকোমল, কিছু দিব্যভাববর্জিত এবং অধিকতর পরিমাণে পশুভাবসংশ্লিষ্ট হইয়া পড়ে। এই জন্ত তাদৃশ সামাজিক রীতি সম্যক্ নির্দোষ বলিয়া আমার বোধ হয় না। \*

“ In the society in which men and women meet together, always sit down and talk together, women's character becomes a little hard and devoid of divine excellence, and is more connected with animality. Hence such social custom does not seem to me to be all for good.”

But the new current had set in ; it was impossible to stand against it. A host of reformers arose—Ram Mohan, the Christian missionaries, Keshab Chandra, Vidyasagar, Bethune, Pyari Chand Mitra, whose activities stamped themselves indelibly on the new literature.

It was, however, from the pen of a leader of the orthodox camp, Raja Radha Kanta Dev, that the first book for the education of women—*Strī-Shikshāvidhāyak*—came out. We know how Raja Ram Mohan Ray had shown that women deserved better treatment and he had preceded many distinguished European writers. It is remarkable that up to the

middle of the nineteenth century even advanced Indian opinion was not quite flattering to women ; it was too ascetic, perhaps, to consider women otherwise than as objects to be avoided : for example, the paper *Tattvabodhinī* gave prominence to the Sanskrit lines :—

অর্থাদ্বিয়শ্চ নিপুণৈরপি সেব্যমানাঃ

নৈবাপ্তভাবমুপযাস্তি ন চ স্থিরত্বম্ ।

“ However skilfully you may follow them, women and money neither become yours nor last for all times.”

In the opinion of Bhudeb, who tried to counteract the propaganda of hostile critics of Hindu society, woman was not merely a comrade but a divinity, hence there could be no talk of an equal status. It must be said, however, that the natural demarcation and inter-dependence of the sexes as laid down in the well-known lines of Tennyson's *Princess* has prevailed in the moral equipment of most writers who have agreed that the status of women must be improved in society and literature, and have acted upon that idea, but it is only fair to state that this concession is largely due to outside pressure and influence. Keshab Chandra Sen had advocated and carried out practical measures for giving women their rightful position. Bankim Chandra in his novels treated of women with instinctive courtesy and helped considerably in raising the tone, followed in this as in other ways by later writers. He has set the sentiment of love in a romantic atmosphere and freed women from the narrow groove of domestic duties, representing them more as comrades than as subordinates to men. His

dissertation on the position of woman in society which forms the fifth chapter in his essay on *Sāmya* is based to a certain extent on John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women*. The question has been mooted again and again, and there is no doubt that in consequence the woman's cause has progressed and she is treated with more consideration and respect. The poet, Sasanka Mohan, in his lyric verses has touched the problem and presented to us the unsophisticated freedom of the country-girl. The idea of a Florence Nightingale volunteering her services to nurse the wounded in both the camps, friendly and hostile, influenced Nabin Chandra's *Subhadra*.\* The following verses set forth the glories of such a line of work for women.

ততোধিক রমণীর আছে কিবা সুখ !

রোগে শান্তি, দুঃখে দয়া,                      শোকেতে সান্ত্বনাছায়া,

দিদি ! এই ধরাতলে রমণীর বুক ।

এতাদিক রমণীর আছে কিবা সুখ ! -

“ What greater happiness has woman in view?

Balm in disease, kindness in sorrow,

cool consolation in grief,

Such, on earth, sister ! is the woman's heart.

What greater happiness does woman know?”

The portrait has been cast in an Oriental mould, and the new idea justified by the love of all beings as taught in the *Gītā*, and what seems to-day to be the natural argument is advanced in support : family life is the training ground for Universal love,

জনক-জননী-মুখ

শিশুর ক্ষুদ্র জগত,

শিশু কিছু নাহি জানে আর ।

ক্রমে বাড়ে পরিসর,            কিশোর কিশোরী দেখে  
 ভ্রাতা ভগ্নী পূর্ণ এ সংসার ।

পতি পত্নী প্রেম রঞ্জে            যৌবন ছুটে তরঙ্গে,  
 আলিঙ্গিয়া ভূতল গগন ।

ক্রমে সন্তানের স্নেহ            দেখায় অনন্তমুখ,—  
 পুণ্যতীর্থ সাগর-সন্মম !

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

পিতামাতা, ভগ্নীভ্রাতা.            পতি, পুত্র, মহাবিশ্বে,  
 এই প্রেম তৃপ্তি নাহি পায় ।

অনন্ত এ বিশ্ব ছাড়ি            কি যে লো অনন্ত আছে,  
 প্রেমসিদ্ধি সেই দিকে ধায় ! \*

'The parents' face is the child's little world ;  
 Nothing else it knows.  
 Little by little the range grows, the young  
 Find the world full of brothers and sisters,  
 In the flow of love 'tween husband and wife,  
 youth eddies on,  
 Embracing the earth and the sky.  
 At last the love for the son shows a million faces,—  
 It is a holy place, the river's tryst with  
 the sea.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

Parents, brothers and sisters, husband and son  
 in this great Universe,  
 This love cannot there satisfy itself.  
 What an infinite is there, Dear, apart from  
 this infinite universe,  
 There flows the sea of love."



One phase of the new outlook is beautifully represented in Rabindra Nath's *Chitrāṅgadā*—woman is not a divinity to be worshipped from a distance, nor an ignominious being to be treated with contempt, but a comrade to be constantly at one's side in weal and woe ; in that way alone can she be fully known and her powers developed.

দেবী নহি, নহি আমি সামান্য রমণী ।  
 পূজা করি' রাখিবে মাথায়, সে-ও আমি  
 নই, অবহেলা করি' পুষিয়া রাখিবে  
 পিছে সে-ও আমি নহি । যদি পার্শ্বে রাখ  
 মোরে সঙ্কটের পথে, দুঃস্থ চিন্তার  
 যদি অংশ দাও, যদি অনুমতি কর'  
 কঠিন ব্রতের তব সহায় হইতে,  
 যদি স্নেহে হুঃখে মোরে কর' সহচরী,  
 আমার পাইবে তবে পরিচয় ।— \*

—রবীন্দ্রনাথ ।

“ Neither a goddess, nor a slight woman am I ;  
 I am not the sort to be worshipped with  
 Reverence, nor to be brushed aside,  
 Tamed and kept behind ! If you keep  
 Me by side, in the steep path, and share  
 All anxious thoughts, if permit me  
 To help you in your difficulties,  
 If you make me your comrade in weal and woe,  
 Then, then you will get to know me.”

The tremendous revolution is witnessed in many a verse in popular use, as well as in other writings ;

the lines, tense with meaning, which begin Chittaranjan's *Kishor-Kishorī*, have a significance not possible to be found in Bengali literature before British influence. The philosophic idea of adolescent love is beautifully maintained throughout.

সে দিন নাহি গৌ আর যবে ভালবাসিতাম  
 শুধু মোর হৃদয়ের তাণ্ডাসারে ।  
 ভালবাসি, ভালবাসি, মনে মনে কহিতাম !  
 কারে ভালবাসি আমি নিজে নাহি জানিতাম !  
 হাসিতাম, কঁদিতাম, শুধু ভালবাসিতাম  
 আপনারই হৃদয়ের ভালবাসারে !

কল্পনা-গগনালোকে উড়ে উড়ে ভাসিতাম !  
 সত্য বলে ধরিতাম সেই কল্পনারে—  
 মেঘের আড়ালে মোর মায়ানীড় বাঁধিতাম,  
 স্বপন-মহন করা ফুলে ফুলে সাজাতাম,  
 কত দীপ জালিতাম, কত গীত গাহিতাম—  
 মেঘের আড়ালে মোর সেই মায়া আগারে !

“ The time has gone by when I loved  
 Only the love of my heart,  
 I love, I love, I kept on repeating,  
 But whom I loved I did not know myself !  
 I laughed and cried, still I loved  
 Only the love of my heart !

In the lighted, airy region of imagination did  
 I float on and on !  
 Those imaginings I seized upon as truth—  
 Behind the clouds I built my nest of illusion,  
 I decked it with flowers from dreams through  
 which I ranged,

Oh the many lamps I lighted, the songs I sang—  
 In that illusory home of mine, behind the  
 cover of clouds! ”

If there has been a tendency towards the dissolution of family ties, there has been on the other hand increased solidarity in the new idea of nationalism. It is difficult, if not absurd altogether, to ignore the importance of patriotic literature in Bengal, specially after the days of Bengal partition. We have described in Chapter III, how the idea of political nationalism was brought to this country from the west, how the touch with the west has been kept up all through, even through the boycott movement to the days of non-co-operation. Patriotism, however sanctioned now by the Sanskrit line—

জননী জন্মভূমিঃ স্বর্গাদপি গরীয়সী

“ Mother and mother-country are superior to heaven,” and however assimilated in life and literature, has been in its expression largely influenced by western literature. Bankim Chandra stood up both for political and cultural nationalism—his novels and *Kamalākānter Daptar* are still powerful incentive to the growth of the patriotic sentiment, of political nationalism. Michael Mādhu Sudan’s verses addressed to Bengal beginning with the lines

রেখো মা দাসেরে মনে

এ মিনতি করি পদে

“ Remember thy servant, Mother!

This my request at thy feet ”

were inspired by a sense of cultural nationalism, and the motto prefixed was Byron’s “ My Native Land! Good Night.” The

character of Indrajit, the hero who extols patriotism before his uncle Bibhishan, and condemns all betrayals of one's own country, in the well-known lines beginning with *হে পিতৃব্য ! তব বাক্যে ইচ্ছি মরিবারে* ' Your words, uncle ! make me wish to die ' shows the new idea. What had drawn from Iswar Gupta mildly humorous lines on the political condition of the country inspired Hem Chandra to write his famous poem—beginning with *বাজুরে শিঙ্গা বাজু এই রবে—* ' Blow, Horn, blow, to the tune of these words ' without any topical occasion for it. Hem Chandra had been a source of patriotic outbursts in song, both in his epic and in his slighter verses, which were sometimes serious, sometimes humorous. Even in his verse-tales, he could not keep it out altogether, *e.g.*, the lines *আর কি সেদিন হবে জগৎ জুড়িয়া যবে* etc. Nabin Chandra in his lyrics as well as in his epics brings in the new sentiment ; his triad on Krishna—*Raivatak, Kurukshetra and Prabhās*—though dealing with the life and career of Sri Krishna, are full of thoughts for the land of Bharata, while *Palāshīr Yuddha* is more directly concerned with the patriotic idea, and brings before its readers the events immediately responsible for the dependence of Bengal. The numerous songs of Rabindra Nath, addressed either to the individual who must work his own salvation alone and unaided, or to the group by an appeal to its sense of patriotism, have enriched Bengali literature to a very great extent, apart from their topical interest and importance which was considerable. The patriotic impulse now turns to the idea of renunciation, for in that way

alone can man serve his country, by giving himself away,—now it turns to the untouchables who have been kept down for centuries !

The communal trouble, the difference between the Hindus and the Muhammadans, is indirectly connected with the influx of western influence. When the creative writers of the country who were Hindus were on the look-out for the past glories of the nation, they instinctively turned to Rajput, Mahratta or Sikh history in which examples of Hindu chivalry and heroism were to be found in abundance ; the history of the Rajputs had been made specially popular and accessible by the publication of Tod's *Rajasthan*. There they learned how Hindus and Muhammadans fought for political supremacy and retold the stories through their creative imagination.

It may be mentioned, in this connection, that not only was the spirit of patriotism in literature awakened by western influence but the occasion for its free play, its target, was also supplied by the west as this patriotism had been directed against the western rulers of the country. Much of the animosity against western influence is thus due to the aversion felt by the conquered against the conqueror.

The advocates of cultural nationalism—among the leaders we must include Bhudeb, Bankim, Vivekananda and others—are busy setting forth the glories and originality of the indigenous culture ; for example, we must not believe all that the European scholar says about our own civilisation ; their views on the history of Bengal and analogous subjects are full of errors and false, pre-conceived notions. Our national philosophy, our religious faith, our mode

of thought are very different from theirs, and should be kept intact by us, free from the contamination of foreign touch. Following this train of thought, distinctions have been observed between the east and west, the former being more or less spiritual, the latter materialistic in its tendencies. Swami Vivekananda and Rabindra Nath have both pointed out the necessity, for a self-respecting nation, of cultural exchange, which would be an impossibility if we could not retain our own culture.

This brings us incidentally to Rabindra Nath's idea of the *Visva-bharati*. The shape which his conception of the mission of India has taken may have nothing western in it, except that the west is a party to it, a party which should both teach and be taught. But the *Visvadev* first appeared to him as his own country; it did not stop where it had started, but had gone on, expanding and developing into the all-embracing universe. This was a distinct idea from the Vedantic one of the unity of all the different manifestations in the Brahman, the unifying spirit of the universe; this was a poet's visualisation of his own country in the form of a personal god, the form gradually expanding into the whole world, nationalism merging in internationalism. It cannot, therefore, be very wrong to set down this idea, which may be called internationalism, ultimately as a western product. The following lines \* will support this view :—

হে বিশ্বদেব,                      মোর কাছে তুমি  
দেখা দিলে আজ কি বেশে ?

\* Rabindra Nath, *Utsarga* (*Visvadev*).

দেখিছ তোমারে                      পূর্বগগণে,  
দেখিছ তোমারে স্বদেশে ।

\*           \*           \*           \*

হৃদয় খুলিয়া                      চাহিছ বাহিরে,  
হেরিছ আজিকে নিমেষে  
মিশে গেছ                      ওগো বিশ্বদেবতা  
মোর সনাতন স্বদেশে ।

“ Oh Universal Being ! In what form  
Do you show yourself to me to-day?  
I have seen you in the eastern sky,  
I have seen you in my own country.  
\*           \*           \*           \*

Baring my heart, I looked out,  
In the twinkling of an eye I found—  
You have been merged, Oh Universal Being,  
Merged in my country that lasts for ever.”

Again, it is necessary to remember the following lines \* in this connection :—

কারো জীবন একলার জিনিষ নয়—সৃষ্টি যে করবে সে নিজের  
চারদিকে নিয়ে যদি সৃষ্টি না করে তবে ব্যর্থ হবে ।

“ No individual has any exclusive right over his life—if the creator does not build upon his environment, then it will end in nothing.” While we have tried to claim all the world as our kin,

সব ঠাই মোর ঘর আছে  
আমি সেই ঘর লব খুঁজিয়া—

“ Everywhere is my home, That home I must seek and find,” our attention has naturally been drawn to the past ages, distant ages, and we have

been interested in the historical study of our own people as well as of all mankind. The results of this new interest are to be found in the publication of many histories of the provinces of India and in the attempts made by all classes of writers to be true to the ideals of our past history in their composition. Rajendra Lala Mitra's antiquarian researches, though mainly carried on in English, are therefore not without their importance for our subject. The prominence given to it in popular magazines is also indicative of the idea. Study of the past revealed a glorious age when heroism was to be found in sturdy souls and was not a rarity, as in the present degenerated days; in that way, the muse of history was invoked for the relief of souls smarting under the consciousness of dependence. Bankim Chandra tried to make the study of history popular by means of his writings; his critical essays passed in review the condition of Bengal in the past and arrived at hopeful conclusions; in his novels we live in the times when Bukhtear Khiliji came to invade Bengal, or when the Rajputs and the Pathans were fighting for Orissa; or when Meer Kasim was trying to save Bengal from the grip of the English; or when, famished to madness and suffering from severe epidemics in 1769, the "sons" of Bengal banded themselves as dacoits and overran the country. The historical drama was also popular and it still retains its popularity to some extent, the works of Girish Chandra Ghose in this context deserving special mention. Wherever we turn we find the study and importance of history much emphasised; the study of the nation's glorious past rivets our attention.



Let us now turn to another aspect of this growing importance of western influence. Auguste Comte, the celebrated French philosopher in early nineteenth century, whose teachings known as Positivism and embodied in the Positivist Philosophy found eager admirers in Bengal, preached that the only positive faith, faith in a God of whom we were certain, was the worship of humanity. Humanity in the concrete was present before us ; what need had we to go seeking after strange gods? Though Bhudeb and Bankim, with all their admiration for the philosophy, were repelled by its godlessness, men were not wanting who embraced the system in its entirety. This new religion could not, no doubt, maintain its ground for long ; but its emphasis on the importance of man even from the religious point of view certainly did not die out. The *Daṛidra-Nārāyaṇa* of Swami Vivekananda and the “ *Vāsudeva* ” of Aurobinda suggest influences of this philosophy behind their eastern and mythological names.\* There is no doubt, though, that Swami

\* Cp. the prayer and good will breathed in the following verses of the *Karaṇīyamettā suttam* ; karaṇīyam atthakusalena/yan tam santam padam abhisamecca/sakko ujū ca sūjñ ca/suvaco c'assa mudu anatinānī/Santussako ca subharo ca/appakicco ca sallahukavutti / santindriyo ca nipako ca/appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho / na ca khuddam samācare kiñci/yena viññū pare upavadeyyum. / Sukhino vā khemino hontu/sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā : / ye kaci pānabhūt' atthi/lasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā/dhigā vā ye mahantā vā/majjhimā rassakā anukathulā diṭṭhā vā ye vā adiṭṭhā/ yevā dūre vasanti avidūre bhūtā vā sambhavesi vā/sabbe sattā bhavanta sukhittā. Na paro param nikubbetha/nātimaññetha katthacinam kañci,/vyārosanāpaṭigha-saññā/nāññamaññassa dukkham iccheyya. Mātā yathā niyam puttam/ āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe/evam pi sabbabhūtesu/mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.

Vivekananda was admonished by his *Guru* Sri Ramkrishna to follow the path of service to humanity in preference to work for individual salvation, on the ground that service to humanity meant service in the sense of religious worship, শিব জ্ঞানে জীব সেবা, etc. Thus he must have got his creed from his Master. But at the same time it is hard not to identify Comte's conception of the Worship of Humanity in such a line as—

বহুরূপে সম্মুখে তোমার ছাড়ি কোথা খুঁজিছ ঈশ্বর ? \*

“ Where do you seek God, leaving aside the many forms before you?” In many lines of Rabinādra Nath we come across the similar idea that God is to be found in our daily communion with other beings, that one must go to the market-place to find him.

হাটের পথে                      তোমার সাথে  
মিলন হবে †

“ On the way to the market-place shall I meet you.” Or,

ডাকো তোমার হাটের মাঝে  
চল্চে যেথায় বেচা কেনা ‡

“ Call me to the centre of your market-place where they are busy buying and selling things.” Reference may be made to the song which open with the words—

বিশ্বসাথে যোগে যেথায় বিহারো ।

\* Vivekananda, *Vira-vānī*.

† *Gītānjali* (Bengali), 8th edition, p. 97.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 106.

“ Where you sport in unison with the universe.”  
 Distinct from this idea is the conception of men as equally important with Divinity ; the conception that worship of divinity is all right, but that the needs of humanity need not be forgotten. This is the underlying idea of the poem—“ Is the Vaishnav's song meant only for Vaikuntha? ”

শুধু বৈকুণ্ঠের তরে বৈষ্ণবের গান ?

The poet passionately enquires :

এ সঙ্গীত-রসধারা নহে মিটাবার  
 দীন মর্ত্যবাসী এই নরনারীদের  
 প্রতি রজনীর আর প্রতি দিবসের  
 তপ্ত প্রেম-তৃষা ?

“ Is not this current of music  
 To satisfy the burning thirst for love  
 Felt every hour of the day and night  
 By these men and women, poor residents  
 Of this mortal earth? ’

And he himself answers :

আমাদেরি কুটীর-কাননে  
 ফুটে পুষ্প, কেহ দেয় দেবতা-চরণে,  
 কেহ রাখে প্রিয়জন তরে—তাহে তাঁর  
 নাহি অসন্তোষ । এই প্রেম-গীতি-হার  
 গাঁথা হয় নরনারী-মিলন-মেলায়,  
 কেহ দেয় তাঁরে, কেহ বঁধুর গলায় ।  
 দেবতারে যাহা দিতে পারি, দিই তাই  
 প্রিয়জনে—প্রিয়জনে যাহা দিতে পাই  
 তাই দিই দেবতারে ; আর পাবো কোথা ?  
 দেবতারে প্রিয় করি, প্রিয়েরে দেবতা ।

( বৈষ্ণব-কবিতা—সোণার তরী )

The suggestion would certainly be preposterous that these were direct results of Comtist philosophy, but it is hard to dissociate one's mind from the view that these have been, unconsciously to the writers, influenced by the ideal of the Worship of Humanity. To quote Romain Rolland : " ideas are the natural outcome of an age so that the same ideas are born at the same time in different minds." \*

Thus we find that in Bengali literature under western influence Man in his individual capacity no longer exists merely for the sake of religion or for the glorification of particular Gods and Goddesses ; that man's infinite powers have been stressed, his group life in the family has been violently disturbed—not only in the economic world but psychic as well ; and man's nationality is a new force to reckon with. No longer does he belong exclusively to any particular sect or society ; and the highest respect is paid to him under the guidance and sanction of religion.

### III. Nature.

Next to the treatment of man, that of nature demands our attention ; our survey of the new literature will bring home to us that here, as elsewhere, the change that has been brought about has been of a revolutionary kind, though that would hardly appear at first sight, because we are so close to the period, if not actually in it.

In old and mediaeval Bengali, descriptions of nature occur no doubt at intervals but nowhere are

\* *Builders of Unity*, Keshab Chandra Sen. English translation. (The *Prabuddha Bhārata* : September, 1929.)

they given prominence, not to speak of independent interest. They are introduced sometimes because they reflect the soul of some individual, and often simply to set off the narrative, and that is the most that can be said of them ; apart from this, nature has no position in pre-British literature,—it is always subordinated to the human interest. Gobinda Das, the personal attendant of Sri Chaitanya, in his travel diary records his impression of the sea in the following lines :

পৰ্বত কানন দেশ নাহি সেই ঠাই ।

কেবল সিন্ধুর শব্দ শুনিবারে পাই ॥

বড় বড় তরঙ্গ আসিয়া সেইখানে ।

ঈশ্বরের গুণ গান করিছে সজ্ঞানে ॥

\* \* \* \*

পৰ্বত সমান বালি হয়ে তুপাকার ।

ঈশ্বরের গুণ যেন করিছে বিস্তার ॥ \*

We may compare also his description of forests and hills in the same diary. Such treatment of external nature has been preserved and continued, *e.g.*, by Bankim Chandra in his description of the sea in the *Kapāl-kundalā*.† Again, in Nabin Chandra Sen's *Prabhās*, however striking the lines that begin the poem may seem to be, there is nothing in the attitude to nature that may be called novel or be described as a departure from the old literary practice.

নীলিমায় নীলিমায়, মহিমায় মহিমায়,

মিশাইয়া পরস্পরে,—মহা আলিঙ্গন !

মহাদৃশ ! অনন্তের অনন্ত মিলন !

\* *Gobinda Dāser Karachā*, p. 42, Cal. University, 1926.

† Chapter V.

“ The blue with the blue, the vast with the vast,  
Mingle they together,—great is their embrace!  
A splendid sight! Infinite merging in the  
Infinite!”

It is only in these days of western influence that nature has won recognition and been treated as independent of man; the treatment is no longer simple, but full of complexities, along with life and thought in general. Iswar Gupta, who stood between the two different ages, at the parting of the ways, shows marks of both in his writings and describes nature both for its own sake and as a set-off to human interest.

In the manner of Wordsworth,—or shall we say according to the teachings of the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau,—nature has been sometimes described as exerting a subtle influence on the human mind:—*e.g.*, in the beautiful lines of Hem Chandra—

হায় রে প্রকৃতি সনে মানবের মন  
বাঁধা আছে কি বন্ধনে বুঝিতে না পারি,  
নতুবা যামিনী দিবা প্রভেদে এমন  
কেন হেন উঠে মনে চিন্তার লহরী ?—

“ Alas! with what tie the human soul  
Is joined to Nature, we do not know;  
Why, else, is this wave of thought  
Different due to day and night? ”

Compare also :

কি যে আছে বনমাঝে, সীমায় পশিলে তার  
উন্মুক্ত আকাশ মত হৃদয় বিস্তারি উঠে ।

—শশাঙ্কমোহন, শৈলসঙ্গীত

“ There must be something in the woods, where,  
as we enter,

The heart expands as the expansive sky.

—Sasanka Mohan, *Shaila Sangit*.

Or, we may quote lines from Tagore's *Chhinna-patra*, under date October, 1891, as an example of the direct realisation of Nature's effect on the human soul :

রুগ্ন ছেলের দিকে যা যেমন করে তাকায় প্রকৃতি সেই রকম  
সুগভীর স্তব্ধ এবং ম্লিন্ধ বিষাদের সঙ্গে আমার মুখের দিকে চেয়েছিল । -

“ Nature looked at my face with the profound calm and tender melancholy of a mother gazing at an ailing son.”

Thus nature is no longer to be treated merely as a cold and beautiful abstraction, but as a sentient being ; it is not a dead thing altogether but sometimes to be treated as having a soul. It will not be out of place to quote the following sentence on the question of English influence in Bengali literature—“ Like Wordsworth, we make love to nature and extract a philosophy out of it. Like Shelley, we invest it with mystic metaphysics. Like Byron, we make it the cue for pouring forth passionate rhapsodies.”\*

The popularity of the knowledge of history has contributed to the growth of another phase in the treatment of nature in literature, in which the glorious associations of the past are invoked, *e.g.*, in the verses of Gobinda Ray, beginning with

নির্মল সলিলে বহিছ সদা

তটশালিনী সুন্দরী যমুনে ও ।

\* *Calcutta Review*, 1885, Art. VII.

“ Flowest thou on, in waters clear,  
Fair, with lovely banks, Jamuna O ”

To this phase does the poet Hem Chandra frequently recur in his patriotic verses, and the name of Sir Walter Scott as a model and inspirer invariably comes up in this connection.

In the next place, we detect an attempt at establishing a personal relationship with nature which was all unknown in old literary works. As a further development it is described as a human being and, thus personified, it represents the mother-country. This note may be detected in the image of Adhibharati Devi called up by Bhudeb and included in his *Hindu-Kanthahār*, where India is described as a goddess, dressed in yellow, glittering in the sunlight, offering protection and ever fruitful.\* An interesting phase of this is seen, specially in Tagore and also in Dwijendra Lal who describe the physical features of India as those of a human being :

ললাটে তোমার নীল নভতল,      বিমল আলোকে চির উজ্জ্বল,  
নীরব আশিষ সম হিমাচল, তব বরাভয় কর ।  
—রবীন্দ্রনাথ ।

হেমন্তা হরিদম্বর পদতলে নীলাম্বুলীলাকিতা,  
ত্রিধা ত্রিধা তরঙ্গিনী হরধুম্রপীযুষনিগলিনী ।  
স্বর্ধোল্ল প্রতিবিশ্বিতাশ্বরলসংগ্রালেম্মৌলিজলা,  
সেঁম্যা স্তাদ“ধিভারতী” ভয়হরা নিত্যানন্দা শাস্ত্রে ॥

One of the mantras for *pranām* is this :

মাতনামি ভবতীং সতীদেহরূপাং  
মাতনামি বহুধাতলপুণ্যতীর্থান্ ।  
মাতনামি পদবুগ্ধতাসমুদ্রাং  
মাতনামি হিমগৌরকিরীটভূবান্ ॥

—*Hindu-Kanthahār*, p. ৩২.

(Compare Bankim's idealisation of India as the Mother's form.)



“ On thy brow the blue sky shines,  
     Ever bright in clear light,  
 Thy arms the Himalayas, silent blessing  
     Chasing fear and granting boons.”

Or. যেদিন সুনীল জলধি হইতে উঠিলে জননী ভারতবর্ষ

“ When, from the blue sea water thou didst arise,  
     O India, mother !”

We may also notice, along with these examples, the spiritualising of Nature in Tagore's poems on *Himālaya* as typifying a store of spiritual energy which appears again and again ; the idea might have come to him from his father Maharshi Debendra Nath whose impressions on this subject are recorded in his autobiography. This spiritualising of nature is farther endowed with a mystic strain, as in the following :

মনে হয় যেন আলোতে ছায়াতে রয়েছে কি ভাব ভরা,  
 হয় কবি হয়, হাতে হাতে আর কিছুই পড়ে না ধরা ।

Next, there is an interpenetration of nature and humanity, of matter and spirit, of the subject and the object, on the basis of Schelling's romantic philosophy which caused a revolution in the literature of Europe in early 19th century by developing one prominent characteristic of romanticism. An example is found in Tagore's *Vasundharā* (in his *Sonār Tarī*).

ওগো মা মৃগয়ি,  
 তোমার মৃত্তিকা মাঝে ব্যাপ্ত হয়ে রই ;  
 দিগ্বিদিকে আপনারে দিই বিস্তারিয়া  
 বসন্তের আনন্দের মতো ; বিদারিয়া

এ বন্ধ-পঙ্কর, টুটিয়া পাষণ-বন্ধ  
 সঙ্কীর্ণ প্রাচীর, আপনার নিরানন্দ  
 অন্ধ ফারাগার,—হিল্লোলিয়া, মর্ষারিয়া,  
 কাম্পিয়া, স্থলিয়া, বিকিরিয়া, বিচ্ছুরিয়া,  
 শিহরিয়া, সচকিয়া আলোকে পুলকে  
 প্রবাহিয়া চ'লে যাই সমস্ত ভুলোকে  
 প্রাপ্ত হ'তে প্রাপ্ত ভাগে :—

“ Oh, Mother Earth,  
 In thy dust let me stretch along ;  
 Spread me out in all directions  
 Like vernal bliss ; rending asunder  
 The cage of this heart, breaking the stone-  
bound

Narrow wall, one's joyless  
 Gloomy vault,—rising and falling like a  
wave, murmuring,

Trembling, dropping, throwing out, radiating,  
 In a tremor and shock ; in joy and light  
 Let me float on, on through the world  
 From end to end.”

The idea is developed in the poet's treatment of the interesting mythological subject in the *Ahalyā* :

আছিলে বিলীন

বৃহৎ পৃথ্বীর সাথে হয়ে এক-দেহ,  
 তখন কি জেনেছিলে তা'র মহান্নেহ ?  
 ছিল কি পাষণ-তলে অস্পষ্ট চেতনা ?  
 জীবধাত্রী জননীর বিপুল বেদনা,  
 মাতৃধৈর্য্যে মৌন মুক ছুঃখ সুখ যত  
 অনুভব করেছিলে স্বপনের মত

সুপ্ত আত্মা, মাঝে ?.....

\* \* \* \*

যে শিশির পড়েছিল তোমার পাষাণে  
রাত্রিবেলা, এখন সে কাঁপিছে উল্লাসে  
আজামূলম্বিত মুক্ত কৃষ্ণ কেশপাশে ।

“ Merged you were  
In the spacious Earth, one with her body ;  
Did you then know her great love?  
Was there any dim sense in the stony block?  
The great sorrow of all-sustaining Mother  
Earth,  
Silent and dumb in the Mother’s patience,  
Did you feel in your dormant soul  
The bliss and sorrow of the Mother,  
As in a dream? . . . . .  
. . . . .  
The dew that fell on your stone  
At night, is now trembling in a glow  
In the black, hanging tresses, reaching  
Down to the knees.”

The personification of nature is invested with a new importance—there is a new mythopoeic element in verse.

শরতে সে শিউলি-বনের তলে  
ফুলের গন্ধে ঘোম্‌টা টেনে চলে,  
ফাল্গুনে তা’র বরণমালা-খানি  
পরাল মোর শিরে ।

“ In Autumn, under the Shephali grove,  
She passes on, veiled in flowers’ bloom,  
In Falgun with her choice garland  
She decked my head.”

This is in the manner of Keats as well as Swinburne where there is deification of nature on lines laid down by Greek mythology. We may specially compare with this Keats' *Ode to Autumn*. The teaching of science has induced the Bengali mind to take a matter-of-fact view of nature; considering the part played by science in the general education of to-day, it could not be otherwise. The wider such education spreads, the stronger will be the materialistic view of physical nature as such. But meanwhile notably complex has been the growth of the spirit of love for the life that is in the green vegetation around us and it should be made clear that this is not wholly due to the spirit of the west. This is evident from the highly thoughtful article in the *Prabāsī*, Baishakh, 1334, গাছপালার প্রতি ভালোবাসা, Love for trees and plants—written by Rabindra Nath, and the Hymn to the Tree বৃক্ষবন্দনা which follows is no less significant. There is indeed a mystic vision that is blended with these imaginings—the trees whisper to the Poet of thousands of years, and there are lines, the sense of which is really incommunicable, addressed to the Tree.

ধ্যানবলে তোমার মাঝার

গেছি আমি, জেনেছি, সূর্যের বক্ষে জলে বহিরূপে  
 সৃষ্টি যজ্ঞে যেই হোম, তোমার সত্য চূপে চূপে  
 ধরে তাই শ্রাম নিষ্করূপ ; ওগো সূর্য্যরশ্মিপায়ী,  
 শত শত শতাব্দীর দিনধেহু হুহিয়া সদাই  
 যে-তেজে ভরিলে মজ্জা, মানবেরে তাই করি' দান  
 করেছ জগৎজয়ী ; দিলে তারে পরম-সম্মান ;



of the west in activities, political and industrial, and extol simplicity as preferable to material prosperity ; the importance or propriety of turning to nature follows as a matter of course.\* The idea comes out in the following lines :

হায় রে, এদেশে কি তেমন সকাল হয় না ? সেই অমৃতের  
অধিকারের মধ্যে জেগে ওঠবার গান এখানকার আকাশে কি ঠিক সুরে  
বেজে উঠতে চায় না ? এদেশে কেবলি কি election আর Balkan  
wars, আর Suffrage movement ! কলের ধোঁয়ায় আকাশের সমস্ত  
জ্যোতিষ্ক লোককে একেবারে ঢেকে ফেললে যে ! কেবল গায়ের জোর,  
কেবল গায়ের জোব—কেবল আদবকায়দা আইন কাহ্নন । সরল আনন্দের  
ছবি কোথায় দেখব—একেবারে সম্পূর্ণ গরীব হ'য়ে যনের আনন্দে মাটিতে  
বসবার সুখ এখানে পাওয়া যায় কোন্ খানে ? †

“ Alas, does it not dawn in this country any more in that manner? In the sky here, does not the song of awakening into bliss seem to sound true and in tune? Have we in this country only the election and Balkan Wars, and Suffrage movement? What, the chimney smoke has wholly covered all the starry regions in the sky ! Sheer physical force, sheer force—merely the formalities, the traditions. Where may we see the picture of simple joy—where

\* It is generally lost to view that such changes are not wholly due to the west ; after all, western influence viewed against a larger background, ceases to be western, and becomes identified with the movement of the Time-Spirit. “ National differences of civilisation being to a large extent merged in one common way of living, the waves of influence which stirred the minds and hearts of men and women would not, usually belong to one nation, but sweep over larger fields.” (Cazamian, *Criticism in the Making*, p. 185.)

† Rabindra Nath in the *Dipikā* for Paush and Magh, 1333 B.S.

in this place is to be had the delight of squatting on the ground, completely impoverished but in the joy of the heart? ”

Of the different phases which western influence in present-day Indian culture presents to us, not the least significant is the stress laid upon the fundamental difference that is said to exist between the east and the west and that follows directly as a corollary of the above ; one is confined to towns, the other is concerned with the villages, centralisation and decentralisation are terms descriptive of the two. Rabindra Nath emphasises this difference again and again in course of his writings—*e.g.*, in his address at Sriniketan.\*

We have thus indicated the extent to which Bengali literature has been affected by coming in contact with western influence, our enquiry being conducted with reference to the attitude towards external nature; we have found that nature has been personified, that the myth-making faculty is being exercised in the creation of new and vivid images, that personal communion has been established between man and nature, and India's physical features have been embodied in a concrete, individual form, while the philosophical doctrine of the interpenetration of subject and object, spirit and matter, may have been utilised as a suitable background for some of the poems in the new literature.

#### IV. *Religion.*

If, however, our views with regard to man and nature have thus been affected, the resultant change

\* *The Prabāsi*, Jaishtha, 1334.

in the angle of vision with regard to religion has been still more remarkable. It will bear repetition to say that surely all the changes that have taken place have not been due to western influence nor can the influence be definitely traced in all cases as really affected by the west, but even the really relevant factors are more extensive than they appear at the first sight to be. It may be noted that western influence has been, to some extent at least, responsible for a spirit of rational enquiry and search after truth, for a historical outlook on religion, for a new strain of mysticism, for a reconstruction of Pauranic legends in the light of history and rationalism, and last, but not least, for widening the ideas of toleration and synthesis, which have always characterised Indian thought.

In modern times there is a widespread tendency to give reasons for and argue about things in general. Every problem must allow itself to be solved by the process of ratiocination, and religion cannot be above this general rule. This tendency no doubt persists through the ages, but it received an emphasis in nineteenth century Bengal, due, in some measure, to western influence,—which presented an alien culture and led young men to question the validity of all things traditional. This brought out the supremacy of reason or at least threw it into prominent relief. This was the case during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

From the history of English education in Bengal, we can trace this prominence of rational analysis to Derozio, the distinguished teacher whose educational career was cut short and academic activity



stopped by his having roused the suspicion of the orthodox section of the people on account of "free" and rational enquiries which he advocated and directed to all things under the sun. But the seeds he had sown on the fertile minds of Young Bengal germinated and brought forth a rich harvest in the immediately succeeding generation of Hindu School boys who distinguished themselves in later life and added, in their turn, to the influence they received. The tendency therefore was strengthened, more than through any other factor, by the spirit of free and rational enquiry which characterised Derozio's system of teaching and disabusing the minds of his young pupils of their pre-conceived but erroneous notions. The crop of short-lived newspapers and clubs which sprang into being in the fourth decade of nineteenth century Bengal was the direct literary result of such teachings.

The spirit of free enquiry at last grew into free-thinking, and in the generation which followed, that to which Bankim and Bhudeb belonged, we find a steady and bold fight against such atheistic views and opinions. This explains, though to a very limited extent, their religiosity—at least the prominence given to it by them in literature. It is impossible to be definite, but it is curious, at least, to observe that both Maharshi Debendra Nath and Rabindra Nath have always set themselves against any argumentation about religion, both have pinned their faith on intuition or inspiration—a natural process, declaring that the grace of God would come when it would come and mortification of the flesh was as useless as trying to reach Him through mere words and reasoning.

But even those who belonged to the conservative section and wanted to combat such heretical tendencies could not all escape the influence of the new rationalism. To convince the free-thinkers, they had to resort to the same method, of reasoning and argument. Bankim Chandra's attempt at clearing up the stains which had grown, in course of the ages, round the Krishna tradition is fully illustrative of this point. He believed in his heart of hearts, he had no doubts, that Krishna was a God, that his character could not be called in question; but he did not wish to thrust his views on his readers—he simply showed by the help of argument in the western method but directed against western scholars that what was urged against Krishna by blasphemous men could not stand the test of reason; it was either wrong or placed in a wrong setting and it thus obscured the issue or was an interpolation of later times.\*

This attitude may be traced to an earlier writer, Rakhal Das Haldar (1832-87), who, it is said, had gone over to England and, through the efforts of a retired civilian, Hodgson Pratt, obtained a lectureship in Bengali and Hindustani. In a book on Ram's life, *Srī Rām Charit*, he reviews the career of Ram Chandra in the light of history, with critical scrutiny, and admires him as a man, ignoring his divinity.

\* “আমি নিজেও কৃষ্ণকে স্বয়ং ভগবান্ বলিয়া দৃঢ়বিশ্বাস করি; পাশ্চাত্য-শিকার পরিণাম আমার এই হইয়াছে যে, আমার সে বিশ্বাস দুর্জীভূত হইয়াছে।..... আমার নিজের বাহা বিশ্বাস, পাঠককে তাহা গ্রহণ করিতে বলি না, এবং কৃষ্ণের ঈশ্বরত্ব-সংস্থাপন করাও আমার উদ্দেশ্য নহে। এ গ্রন্থে আমি তাঁহার কেবল মানব-চরিত্রেরই সমালোচনা করিব।”—কৃষ্ণচরিত্র, প্রথম খণ্ড, প্রথম পরিচ্ছেদ।

In order to give rational explanations about the *avatārs* (incarnations of God), it was felt necessary to correlate them to the past historical associations and present them as real, historical personages who were not the less divine for their human character,—because they had been evoked by the Time-Spirit, in different crises of the world. Such a tendency may be described as occasioned by the historical outlook on religion, and it is not very wide of the mark to say that the Hindu doctrine of re-incarnations was sought to be justified by history and Carlyle's theory of the Divine Idea, which in its turn was derived from the German philosophers. The presence of western influence in this phase of thought is evident, because, above all, the idea of history comes more or less from the west. In order to explain or justify a religious idea, what is more natural than the attempt to relate it to historical evolution?

It is very interesting to find how this is brought about. Krishna, for example, is a historical personage, born in India in a critical time, and helping by the force of his personality—which was undoubtedly great—to establish peace; there was a triangular fight which raged between the Bramhins, the Kshatriyas, and the non-Aryans, the final result being a blending of the combatants into one Indian people; this is the idea in Nabin Chandra Sen's great cycle of Krishna epics—*Raivatak*, *Kurukshetra* and *Prabhās*. The blessings of such an amalgamation are described in a prophetic strain in the following lines\* among others :

আর্য্য অনার্য্যের রক্ত হইয়া মিশ্রিত  
কত নব জাতি, কত সাম্রাজ্য মহান্

\* *Prabhās*, Canto XII.

করিবে স্বজন, পার্থ ! যুগ-যুগান্তর !

ভারতের মক্কা হবে রাজস্থান !

“ The blood of the Aryans and the Non-Aryans will mingle and create many new nations, many big Empires, and on through the ages ! The deserts of India will be turned into Rajasthan—‘ the place of Kings.’ ”

Even the theory of the wanderings of the Aryans in Asia and Southern Europe are not altogether ignored, as the Yadavas, after the dissolution of their empire in western India, were to move on to the Red Sea or somewhere near it—*Lohit Sāgara* or *Laban Sāgara*—and the migration is predicted by Vyasa, the Rishi of the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>\*</sup> It is hard not to see in this a distinct working of the historical idea of the west.

As a result of the new idea of looking at religion from the standpoint of history and out of a desire to give a rational explanation, there has been synthetic reconstruction of Pauranic legends, to make them acceptable to the new class of readers. For example the poet's conception of the marriage of Vajra and Chanchala—thunder and lightning—in *Vritra-samhār* has been explained by the poet as the allegorical representation of an ordinary phenomenon of nature, which seeks to exalt the union of beauty and strength—the highest point to which external nature could rise. Hem Chandra's *Dashamahāvidyā* was considerably influenced by Darwin's theory of Evolution which had no little share in moulding the explanation of the doctrine of Karma as given by

<sup>\*</sup> *Ibid.*

Vyasa to Arjuna in Nabin Chandra Sen's *Prabhās*.\* The idea of representing the Hindu Goddess Uma with a child in her arms as Humanity after Comte's conception underwent modification in the same poem of Hem Chandra, only on the suggestion of Bhudeb, to whom the draft was shown.† Apart from this, we find both in Madhu Sudan and in Hem Chandra examples of a tendency to borrow legends from Greece and Rome and to present them in an Indian setting. We get this trait in several poems of Rabindra Nath as well, *e.g.*, in the conception of Siva as the time-force in his poem *Tapo-Bhanga*‡ where the poet is the messenger of Mahendra, eager to disturb Siva's meditations, and the God's transformation from the ascetic into the lover is wrought after the season's change from bleak winter to flowery spring, the *tāndab* or dance of the God being imaged in the Vaishakh storm, *Kāla-Vaishākhī* : it is not desirable to quote any single line or stanza from the poem to illustrate the general idea which runs through the body of the poem. Anyway, it is quite reasonable to conclude from the above that western culture has contributed its quota to the store-house of Hindu Mythology.

It is not tenable, no doubt, to hold that all mysticism that we find in the new literature is western in origin; there has been a strong current of mysticism in Bengali literature prior to its contact with the west; the Upanishads, Vaishnavism,

\* *Ibid.*

† *Bhūdeb-Charit*, Vol. II, p. 301.

‡ *The Pūrābī*, 1332 B.S., p. 29.

Sahajiya, Sufism, all these have fed the mystic tendency in the literature, and all that may be said in this connection is that an acquaintance with the literature of the west in its turn added its quota. For example, the image of the bridegroom and the parable of the talents are sometimes to be found in Rabindra Nath's poems.

*V. Attempts at Synthetic Reconstruction,  
Toleration and 'Samanvay.'*

Specially with the advent of new ideas and religious ideals, it was incumbent on the thinkers or those who sought the truth to harmonise the discordant notes sounded in a clash and conflict of differing creeds, to fuse varied experiences or varieties of religious experience into one grand whole, so that the truth of religion might be established beyond doubt and dispute and raised to a height from which it could never be dislodged. For this purpose, the elements in the orthodox Hindu religion had to be sifted and tested on comparison with the creed of foreign churches: Hindu religion, because the religious ideas up till now prevalent in the literature of Bengal have almost without any exception their source in Hinduism and appeal to the Hindu public.

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ GROUP.

Ram Mohan, the first great seeker after Truth in the nineteenth century Bengal, since the introduction and establishment of western influence in the country was an ardent and generous advocate of toleration. It may seem strange at the first

view that the man who, while still in his teens challenged Hindu idolatry and had to leave home in consequence, who in mature years wrote a treatise in Persian decrying the idolatry observed by all nations, who for years carried on a campaign in defence of the worship of the True God without the help of images, who criticised the Christian Missionaries and suffered controversial attacks on the question of the Christian doctrine about the divinity of Christ and the miracles, had a right to be considered as the promulgator of ideas of toleration. But so it was. The trust-deed of the Samaj framed by him adequately represents his views in this direction :

“ \* \* \* That in conducting the said worship and adoration, no object, animate or inanimate, that has been, or is, or shall hereafter, become, or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying, in the hymns or other modes of worship that may be used or delivered in the said message or building : and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymns, be delivered, made, or used in such worship, but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.”

Such an idea fitly came from him because he had carefully gone through the Christian Scriptures, compiled the *Precepts of Jesus*, and had been an earnest student of Islam and Hinduism in all their

branches. The Samaj as started by him was a western institution—congregational worship through sermon and music—in a Hindu garb, because of the chanting of Vedic *slokas* by Brahmins. But there is no doubt that the real mission of his life was to give to the world a system of catholic worship.

Maharshi Debendra Nath—the *Pradhān Āchāryya* or the Chief Minister, as he was called—wanted to take his stand on the Vedas, but they did not satisfy him. He fell back upon the Upanishads, they satisfied him neither; he started to select passages, with alterations as he thought necessary, and compiled a code—“an Upanishad” he called it—and brought together the principles of the new faith in the *Brāhma-dharma*. It is interesting to note that a translation from the French theist Fenelon finds a place in it, the hymn that, as quoted in his Bengali Autobiography, is rendered from the original French by Raj Narayan Basu. The story of this compilation of Brahmo principles is told at length in the 23rd chapter of the Autobiography but in the previous chapter he says, it is the **আত্মপ্রত্যয়-সিদ্ধ জ্ঞানোজ্জ্বলিত বিশুদ্ধহৃদয়** (the pure heart illumined by knowledge which has attained to self-consciousness) which is the foundation or basis of Brahmo principles. Thus the Maharshi does not pin his faith on reason, but on the heart. **পবিত্র হৃদয়েতেই ব্রহ্মের অধিষ্ঠান। পবিত্র হৃদয়ই ব্রাহ্মধর্মের পত্তনভূমি। সেই হৃদয়ের সঙ্গে যেখানে উপনিষদের মিল, উপনিষদের সেই বাক্যই আমরা গ্রহণ করিতে পারি। আর হৃদয়ের সঙ্গে যাহার মিল নাই, সেই বাক্য আমরা গ্রহণ করিতে পারি না। সকল শাস্ত্রের শ্রেষ্ঠ যে উপনিষৎ তাহার সঙ্গে এখন আমাদের এই সম্বন্ধ হইল।**



“ It is the pure heart which is the seat of Brahma ; it is the pure heart which is the basic ground of Brahmoism. We can accept only that passage from the Upanishads which is in consonance with that heart ; we cannot accept those passages with which our heart is not in agreement. This is now our relation with the Upanishads, the greatest of all Shastras.” Thus Debendra Nath emphasises the appeal of the heart or inspiration and in doing so opens up a vista of catholic thought independent of any Scriptures. Such a view receives support from the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, 1777 śaka (1855), Vaishakh, where is published a lecture delivered on the 19th Chaitra of the preceding year before the Bhowanipore Brahmo-Samaj—amply demonstrating the tolerant nature of the new faith :

ব্রাহ্মধর্মসংক্রান্ত সমুদয় তত্ত্ব নিরূপিত হইয়াছে, আর কিছুই নির্দ্বারিত হইবার সম্ভাবনা নাই, আমাদের একরূপ অভিপ্রায় নহে। ধর্ম বিষয়ে ইতিপূর্বে যাহা কিছু নির্ণীত হইয়াছে এবং উত্তরকালে যাহা নির্ণীত হইবে, সে সমুদায়ই আমাদের ব্রাহ্মধর্মের অন্তর্গত। .... আমরা প্রাচীন সম্প্রদায়ের গ্রায় ইংলণ্ডীয় ভাষা শিক্ষা করিতে ভীত হই না এবং ইউরোপীয় খৃষ্টীয় সম্প্রদায়ের গ্রায় কোন অভিনব বিচার প্রচার দেখিয়াও কম্পিত হই না।.....অখিল সংসারই আমাদের ধর্মশাস্ত্র ; বিশুদ্ধ জ্ঞানই আমাদের আচার্য্য।

“ All the facts relating to Brahmoism have been ascertained, nothing else remains to be known,—this is not our idea. Whatever has been already known about religion, whatever will be known in subsequent times, will all fall within the scope of our Brahmoism.....Like the orthodox class we are not afraid of learning the English language, nor do

we tremble, like the Christian community of Europe, at the spread of some new learning.....All the world is our Holy Book ; pure knowledge is our Teacher.” \*

Keshab Chandra Sen, who infused new strength into the Brahmo Samaj and made it what it is, emphasised likewise the harmonising aspect of the new faith. Among other reasons for his seceding from the church of Debendra Nath, his preference for Christianity must have been a potent one. So much impregnated was he with the ideas underlying the New Testament that he hoped Europe and Asia would learn to find harmony and unity through the personality of Christ and the principles of divine forgiving and self-sacrifice that are indissolubly associated with him. Taking the name of Jesudas, observing fast during Christmas, establishing a Brahmo Tract Society and while in England writing general epistles to Indian Theists are further signs of his love for Christ. In youth he had seen visions of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the apostle Paul.† “ The harmony of religions was the real mission of the Brahmo Samaj,” this statement made by him deserves to be mentioned in this connection. Remarkable was his idea of the New Dispensation which was intended to bridge the gulf between theism and polytheism through the recognition of Gods and Goddesses interpreted as allegorical personifications of divine attributes, as well as

\* স্বরচিত জীবনচরিত, Chapter 24.

† Romain Rolland : *Builders of Unity, Prabuddha Bhārata*, September, 1929.

prophets of the world who ministered to God's purpose. Thus Muhammad and Moses, Zoroaster and Christ were all recognised by him and admitted into the new hierarchy. His *Slokasamgraha* or the revised Brahmo code which, however, failed to supplant Debendra Nath's *Brāhma Dharma* contains *slokas* from the different scriptures of the world. In brief, the influence of the west in strengthening ideas of toleration so far as Keshab Chandra is concerned is too patent to need much elaboration, and may be easily corroborated by looking up passages in the *Sangata*.

In spite of there having been rifts in the lute, or occasional bursts of intolerance in his preachings, such words as the following from Keshab Chandra had great effect on the youth of India :—

“ As a member of the Universal Theistic Church, I have protested against all manner of sectarian antipathy and unbrotherliness, and advocated the unification of all churches and sects in the love of one True God ”.....“ All nations are pressing forward to the Kingdom of God. Let not India sleep or lag behind. Rouse up the millions of her sons and daughters, and cast off the fetters with which they are enchained to idolatry and caste.....Preach not lifeless dogmas or creeds ; form no narrow sect or clan. Faith in the living God is your only creed—a creed of fiery enthusiasm and invincible power .....And let your words be words of love and peace, not of sectarian antipathy. Love all parties, and gratefully accept all that is good and true in each.”\*

\* The *Indian Mirror*, July 8, 1870.

## THE HINDU REVIVAL.

In the absence of any other name, this seems to be a fitting epithet to combine and include Bankim and Bhudeb, Sasadhar and Krishnananda, those sturdy souls who stood up as champions of Hinduism, claiming at the same time that it was the Universal Religion. Bhudeb staunchly held this opinion and it may be said in passing that though he continued to study western philosophy till a late age, if not to the very end, his inspiration did not come from that source, which served only to enhance his admiration for the religion of his fathers ; and western influence, so far as it relates to him and his ideas on religion, plays only a very secondary part. The following passage may be taken as representing his view in this respect :

হিন্দুধর্মের লক্ষ্য সর্বব্যাপক, সেই জতাই হিন্দুধর্ম কোন ধর্মের বিদ্বেষী নহে স্বতরাং এডুকেশন গেজেটের লেখায় ব্রাহ্ম, মুসলমান, খৃষ্টান প্রভৃতির উপর কোনরূপ শ্লেষ কটাক্ষ না থাকে এবং কোন ব্যক্তি বিশেষের উপর অসংযত ভাষা প্রয়োগ করা না হয় ।

“ Hinduism is inclusive in its aim, so it does not hate any religion. Therefore no articles in the *Education Gazette* may contain an attack against the Brahmos, the Muhammadans, the Christians and others, and there may not be any careless language against any particular individual.”\* Elsewhere he says that Hinduism has lived so long because it is the only perfect and universal religion.

\* *Bhudeb-Charit*, Part III, p. 315.

“সর্বপ্রকার অবস্থাতেই ভারতবাসীর সনাতন হিন্দুধর্ম অজর, অমর ও অখণ্ড কেন? উহাই যে সর্বপ্রকার অধিকারীর সর্বপ্রকার সাধনার জন্ত উন্মুক্ত পরম কারুণিক বিরাট সর্বব্যাপক ধর্ম।”

“Why is the Sanatan Hinduism of the Indians undecaying, immortal and complete, in all conditions? Because it is the wide, all-embracing, all-merciful religion, open for all kinds of *Sādhana* and to all classes of seekers.”

This would serve to illustrate Bhudeb's attitude to other religions; tolerant, because Hinduism includes all other views, and to such an attitude, western influence, whatever of it there had been in his character and training, contributed but little, except that his education enabled him to discriminate and criticise the views of western scholars from the standpoint of a Hindu, patient, sympathetic, but at the same time calm in his conviction that his religion is the best, because most inclusive.

In Bankim Chandra, Hinduism is more aggressive, and he is out—so feels the reader—to vindicate the superiority of his faith. But here he parted company with the extreme section of either side and steered a middle course, as while discussing the historicity of the *Mahābhārat*, he was unable to agree with the conclusions of either indigenous or foreign scholarship.\* But there was another aspect of him,

\* An emphatic dissent from Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani's views is interesting; this is found in a footnote to an article on Hinduism in the *Prachār*, presumably by Bankim Chandra.

পণ্ডিত শশধর তর্কচূড়ামণি মহাশয়, যে হিন্দুধর্মপ্রচার করিতে নিযুক্ত, তাহা আমাদের মতে কখনই টিকিবে না, এবং ঐহার যত্ন সফল হইবে না। এইরূপ বিশ্বাস আছে বলিরা, আমরা ঐহার কোন কথার প্রতিবাদ করিলাম না।..... হিন্দুইতি

which emphasised the unity of religions—and which came out again and again in course of his writings : —ধর্মের যিনি যে ব্যাখ্যা করুন না, ধর্ম এক। \* “ Whatever explanations of Dharma may be forthcoming, Dharma is one.”\* Again, “the essence of all religions is Dharma,” and thus did he draw a distinction between Dharma and religions, Dharma being the fullness of manhood, the all-round, full development of man.† He agreed, in short, with the dictum, “ The substance of religion is culture.” For him, all religions are included in Hinduism, which was to him synonymous with Vaishnavism.

গড় বলি, আল্লা বলি, ব্রহ্ম বলি, সেই এক জগন্নাথ বিষ্ণুকেই ডাকি। সর্বভূতের অন্তরাত্মাস্বরূপ জ্ঞান ও আনন্দময় চৈতন্যকে যে জানিয়াছে, সর্বভূতে যাহার আত্মজ্ঞান আছে, যে অভেদী, অথবা সেইরূপ জ্ঞান ও চিন্তের অবস্থা প্রাপ্তিতে যাহার যত্ন আছে, সেই বৈষ্ণব ও সেই হিন্দু।

( ধর্মতত্ত্ব, বিংশতিতম অধ্যায় )

“ We may take the name of God, of Allah, of Brahma, but it is the same Vishnu, Lord of the Creation, whom we invoke. He who has known the Being full of knowledge and bliss as the Soul of all things, who realises himself in all created beings, who makes no distinction or who tries to attain to

পড়িলে পা বাড়ায় না, টিকটিকি ডাকিলে “ সত্য সত্য ” বলে, হাই উঠিলে তুড়ি ধের, এ সকল কি হিন্দু ধর্ম ? অমুক শিয়রে শুইতে নাই, অমুক আস্ত্রে ঝাইতে নাই, শুল্ক কলসী দেখিলে যাত্রা করিতে নাই, অমুক বারে কোঁরী হইতে নাই, অমুক বারে অমুক কাজ করিতে নাই, এ সকল কি হিন্দু ধর্ম ?.....যদি ইহা হিন্দু ধর্ম হয়, তবে আমরা মুক্ত কণ্ঠে বলিতে পারি যে, আমরা হিন্দু ধর্মের পুনর্জীবন চাহি না।

( প্রচার, ১ম বর্ষ, ১৫ পৃঃ )

\* ভালবাসার অভ্যাস,বিবিধ প্রবন্ধ।

† *Dharmatattva*, Chapp. III, IV.

such a state of knowing and feeling, is the real Vaishnav and real Hindu.” (*Dharmatattva*, Chapter XX.)

*Sāmanjasya* and *samanvay* were words which guided Bankim. He had seen much of westernisation, bred as he had been in a western school of thought. He was fitter than Keshab Chandra to appeal to the anglicised section of the people, as Thakur Das Mookerjee, a critic and an admirer, said of him :—

পাশ্চাত্যশিক্ষা-প্রপীড়িত, বেকন-বিলোড়িত-মস্তিষ্ক, এপিকিউরস্ শিষ্যদিগকে ধর্মশিক্ষা দিতে,—তিনিই অধিকতর সমর্থ, বিধিমত প্রকারে উপযুক্ত । \*

“ It is he who is able by far, and properly equipped, to teach religion to the disciples of Epicurus, to those whose brains are muddled by Bacon, to those who are oppressed by western lore,” The influence of the west is to be marked in his views on toleration—if we are to agree with Thakur Das :

পাশ্চাত্য প্রত্যক্ষ বিজ্ঞানের অঙ্কার প্রধান প্রশ্ন—সামঞ্জস্য । নববিধানাচার্যের নব বিধানের অবতারণা সামঞ্জস্য ও সমন্বয়ের জন্ত । বঙ্কিম বাবুর ধর্ম ব্যাখ্যাতেও সামঞ্জস্যের কথা । ভিন্ন ভিন্ন দিকে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন সুরে একই সঙ্গীত, আর সে গীতের একই অর্থ ।

“ The dominating question of the positive science of the west to-day is—harmony. The introduction of the New Dispensation by its sponsor has been for harmony and *samanvay*. Bankim Babu has harped on the same theme of *samanvay*, in his interpretations of Dharma. In different directions and set to

different tunes, there is the same music, and with the same intent.' '\*

One other associate of the group—the poet Nabin Chandra Ser—may be instanced in this connection. He versified the story of the life of Christ,—the Gospel according to St. Matthew,—in the introduction to which he wrote :

কৃষ্ণোক্ত অবতারতত্ত্বানুসারে কৃষ্ণ, বুদ্ধ, খৃষ্ট, মহম্মদ, চৈতন্য সকলেই  
আর্য্যধর্ম্মাবলম্বীদের কাছে অবতারস্বরূপ পূজনীয় ।

“ According to the theory of incarnations propounded by Krishna,—Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, Chaitanya all are to be worshipped as incarnations by those who profess the Aryan faith.” It is easy to find out the trend of Bankim Chandra’s thoughts continued here.

#### RAMKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA AND HIS DISCIPLES.

It would be wide of the mark to trace any western influence in Ramkrishna Paramahamsa and his creed, and the attempt to do so is sure to result in ridicule and absurdity. But in any account of the Bengali mind and of the literature which partially expresses that mind, it is impossible to leave him out. At present he is exerting a tremendous influence over the minds of the people of the country ; and the influence is gradually increasing to huge proportions. It is necessary to point out that Ramkrishna was an absolutely original being and he went through every form of *sādhana*—of religious devotion that he could think or hear of—and practised

\* *Ibid*, p. 17.



it till it became his own. When he talks of toleration, when he emphasises—যত যত তত পথ—when he advises all to persist in their own beliefs whatsoever may be the beliefs, it is with a boldness and an originality that nothing can match, for it comes out of life, not out of ideas imbibed at second-hand. There is a heroism, so to speak, in thus confronting all forms of belief, but here we are not concerned with that so much as the literary expression of the ideas of toleration which emanated from him or through his disciples. When he took up Islam, he had become an out-and-out follower of Muhammad, he did not feel the least desire for even looking at the Hindu gods and goddesses, and he attained success in his own line. He realised, and realised fully, that the manifestations of the Mother were infinite. In the aggressive Hinduism of Swami Vivekananda, such toleration received a new connotation. The contact with an alien school of thought like the western impressed him strongly with the need of the unification of religions which alone would or might serve as the common platform of the peoples of India, and he was never tired of saying that work on any other line would be disastrous to the real interests of India. But such unification was possible, not by the survival of one faith to the exclusion of all others, nor by any eclecticism which would try to combine and synthetise in an artificial way all that was best in the different faiths, but only by the simpler and more natural process, a process which was consistent with the trend of Indian thought of recognition that all faiths based on fundamental universal principles and spiritual realisations would lead to salvation. The essence of religion

consisted in realisation : nothing else mattered. " Religion is neither in books, nor in intellectual consent, nor in reasoning. Reason, theories, documents, doctrines, books, religious ceremonies are all helps to religion; religion itself consists in realisation." Hence he required Islamic body for the Vedantic brain, for the success of his propaganda in the cause of Vedanta—the doctrine which lay close to his heart. For the renascence of India which, Swamiji knew, was coming, he laid down the doctrine of a universal religion which declared that each soul was potentially divine, and the divinity was to be realised by controlling external and internal nature through work or worship or philosophy, it did not matter which, and that doctrines or dogmas, rituals or ceremonies, books or forms, were all of secondary importance. Dearly as he loved his Master, he never made a fetish of him and whenever there would be an occasion of serving Humanity he declared he would never let his devotion to the Master stand in the way. Contrasted with the need for realisation in as many ways as possible felt by Ramkrishna, we find that Swamiji was impelled by a social need, to meet the requirements of Indian society which required to be unified in order to be fairly started on the road to progress : in the latter case the presence of the west, of an alien culture, cannot be wholly ignored. So far with regard to Swami Vivekananda. The same strain may be heard in the writings of Swami Saradananda and Swami Abhedananda, the two great preachers and thinkers of the Ram Krishna Order, and also in the plays of Girish Chandra Ghosh some of which distinctly reflect the trend of thought introduced by

Ramkrishna Dev—All ways lead to God, যত যত তত  
 পথ, “As many ways (to God) as there are  
 minds,” and it is easy to cite instances from their  
 works.

THE PERSONALITY OF RABINDRA NATH AND AUROBINDO.

Rabindra Nath in his own personal capacity has done much in infusing a liberal idea in our thoughts on religion. It is no doubt true he has time and again fought shy of dogma and traditional ways, that he has declared war to the bitter end against the hoary-headed superstition in all forms and shapes, but at the same time he has refused consistently to hitch his wagon to the yoke of any definite, and consequently limited, creed. The mediaeval sages and devotees, Kabir for example, have been his favourite authors, and he has done his best in reviving their study, thus linking himself to those worshippers of the One God who poured out their hearts in intensely devotional songs. Hence his love for the Bauls, those wandering people who dedicate their lives to the adoration of their God through songs and mystic *sādhana* and are still to be found in remote Bengal villages. Having closely studied the Upanishads, and walked in his father's steps, he is severe against asceticism; for in him also the principle of selfless work taught and expounded in the *Gītā* finds its echo, the householder must work with his face turned to God—for in that way alone, says he, can work be really delightful.

“ We shall be able to turn our work into pure delight, by giving up attachment to work, by removing from ourselves all desires about the results of our work.”\*—*Shantiniketan*, Part IV—“ Work.”

All these are, however, drawn from indigenous ideas and we may not trace them to any outside cause. But the insistence on the duties of the householder is sometimes too strong to be only derived and strengthened by passages from the Upanishads, and in such cases it is difficult not to say that the extra emphasis must have come from an acquaintance with the protestant idea of anti-monasticism; it is quite possible that Tagore had developed this idea by himself, or got it from his father, and there is nothing to preclude this possibility; but, on the other hand, the alternative is also equally to be admitted, for the anti-monasticism is one of the principles which came from overseas and stamped itself on the reformed religion. A passage illustrative of the above may be found in the *Shantiniketan* (No. 4), Shakti—সংসারের মধ্যে থেকেই আমরা সংসারের উর্দ্ধে উঠতে পারি—কর্মের মধ্যে থেকেই আমরা কর্মের চেয়ে বড় হতে পারি—

“ By remaining in the world we may rise above the world, by remaining in the midst of work we may be greater than the work.”

Apart from the numerous, sweet devotional songs far above the din of theological and sectarian controversy which continue to charm and exalt

\* “ কর্মের আসক্তি দূর করে কর্মের কলাকান্দা বিসর্জন করে কর্মকে বিপুল আনন্দময় করে তুলতে পারব ”—শান্তিনিকেতন, চতুর্থভাগ, “কর্ম” ।

readers of Tagore's *Gītānjali*, there are poems which definitely cry out against the narrowness of our conception of Godhead and demand an interpretation that would meet with universal application. In the different forms of external nature, through the different moods of mind, in silence and music, the presence of God is invoked. So far there might be no departure from the established ideas; but this cannot be said specially when Tagore asserts that God is not to be found in temples and other places of worship and exhorts us to find Him in our communion with our comrades on the fields of action :—

“ Devotion and worship, *Sāadhanā* and adoration.  
—Let everything be put aside.”

ভজন পূজন সাধন আরাধনা

সমস্ত থাক পড়ে ।

Nor can this be said of the ideas that find expression in some of his *Shantiniketan* discourses, as for example,—

মাস্তম্বের এই কোলাহলময় হাটে যেখানে কেনা বেচার বিচিত্র লীলা  
চলেচে, এরি মধ্যে এই মুখর কোলাহলের মধ্যেই তাঁর পূজার গীত উঠচে—  
এর থেকে দূরে সরে গিয়ে কখনই তাঁর উৎসব নয় । ( অন্তরতর শান্তি )

“ In this market-place of men, full of hubbub, where a romantic play is going on in buying and selling, in the midst of this, of this loud and vocal noise does His hymn rise up—His festivity is certainly not far away from this.” (The Inner Peace.)

Such identification of God with the men and women that toil and moil on the vineyards of life seems to be a distant echo of Comte's ideal, as has been remarked before, made assimilable with the

help of the author's own *Sāadhanā* and trained thought.

Along with Rabindra Nath it is necessary to mention Aurobindo, a thinker not, perhaps, so prolific as the Poet in his literary activity but all the same controlling and guiding an advanced section of the thoughtful people of India. His re-interpretation of the *Gītā* and other writings that have appeared either in their English original or in their translation in Bengali reveal a personality that, taking stand on a higher ground than the general, surveys the universe with a glance that has nothing sectarian about it. It is fullness, abundance, perfection that is the ideal of Godhead described in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and his group, and much insistence is laid on this fullness of conception, the plenitude of powers. This is a strain which has made itself heard in Bengali literature, but it must be said there is nothing of the western in it, except the attempt to include the west in a comprehensive synthesis of life.

#### THEOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALISM.

The theosophical and spiritual movements, both western in their origin, have helped to swell the tide of toleration in religion by bringing under one standard men with differences of faith and creed. The theosophist, who was attracted to India and for whom the land of the Mahatmas had a peculiar meaning, could sympathise with the principles inculcated in Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, in Islam and Brahmoism, because he took his stand on the "Immanence of God and Solidarity of Man,"

which became his watchword. The different faiths therefore were re-interpreted, re-stated with suitable emphasis and Theosophy became a common platform on which the followers of the Masters of the World could assemble in order to pursue their religious ideal.\* It cannot be gainsaid that this movement has helped in its own way the growth of religious toleration in Bengal as well as in other provinces of India, nor can it be affirmed that the movement has had no result on the literature of the country. Theosophist periodicals in Bengali have come to stay and such a book as গীতায় ঈশ্বরবাদ *God in the Gītā* by Hirendra Nath Datta betrays no indication of any narrow creed or dogma, while making valuable contribution to Bengali literature.

The spiritualist, though hailing from a foreign and distant land, has likewise started with some doctrines which need not be disputed,—the presence of other beings, of there being a world peopled by disembodied spirits,—and these ideas have furnished another common platform where men of different faiths may meet and discuss about the Great Hereafter without violently disturbing their own religious beliefs. Such ideas have been incorporated into the form of the novel by Tekchand—or Peary Chand Mitra—and also by Surendra Nath Bhattacharyya—and such novels, specially by the latter, have been immensely popular.

\* The Theosophical Society was started in 1875. The acceptance of Universal Brotherhood is binding on the members. It “seeks to draw the existing religions into united friendly co-operation,” in order to save the world from Materialism. See *Theosophy*, Annie Besant.

*VI. Conclusion*

In this chapter we have classified and examined the thought contents and tendencies in Bengali literature, with reference to the broad topics of man, nature and religion, pointing to the effect of the west on the changes that are evident.

We have thus seen how the idea of religious toleration has been widened by western agencies : the pioneers of the Brahmo Samaj, specially Keshab Chandra, had known the different faiths and wanted to bring about a harmony; the leaders of neo-Hinduism—the renascent Hinduism—wanted to extend such ideas because Hinduism to them was the most inclusive of all religions, and the principles taught in the *Gītā* were to be found applicable to all other religions, the founders of which were so many re-incarnations of the Great Being. Swami Vivekananda, the distinguished disciple of Sri Ramkrishna, who was an entirely original thinker and *sādhak*, made no fetish of his particular faith, and preached the unity of all religions with all the emphasis that he could command, because religion alone could save India from being submerged by the alien culture. Rabindra Nath and Aurobindo have both contributed considerably to lift religion out of the mire of sectarian disputes, and theosophy and spiritualism, born in the west, have helped what may be described as the spirit of the times. All these activities have their reflex in literature and indications of western influence have been given in their proper context.

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## CHAPTER IX

### Conclusion

We have at last, in accordance with our programme as previously laid down, arrived at results in connection with western influence in Bengali literature. We have found that the literature has been affected by its contact with an alien culture, a foreign literature, and that the changes extend both to the thoughts which constitute the matter or contents, and also to the forms of expression both in prose and verse. The language itself shows signs of the new influence ; there has been remarkable contribution to the vocabulary ; the prose style has been formed and the poetic improved in quality ; while the growth in the volume of the literature has been considerable likewise. Bengali drama has been practically a new form ; such has been the case with Bengali novel ; and the epic has grown into something new, quite distinct from the *Mangal gans* that had been the vogue in the centuries that had preceded. The lyric also shows abundant signs of the richness of the new influence, and its technique at the present day, the prosody and the phrasing, owes much to the model of English literature. The greatest change, however, is noticeable in Bengali prose. Whether the essay or the periodical literature, the prose biography or history through prose, theological dissertations or philosophical discourse, —everything is a departure from the established

ways of the previous centuries. If this is so with regard to the mere form, how much remains to be said as regards the spirit of the literature, its new mood and tendencies, its matter and contents ! There has been an upheaval—a revolutionary change—though some of it might or would have come about by itself ; we may take stock of it by noting that man's individuality has received a new interpretation, his group life has been greatly disturbed, women have entered into literature, as in life, demanding their rights to be considered equal to men, nationalism has been recognised as a potent force and represented as such in literature, Humanity has been raised to the rank of Godhead, and judged worthy of worship and service. Nature is now no longer viewed as a mere setting, but is deemed to be actively helping or hindering man, while the spiritualising of nature in the light of recent European literature and literary ideal is now a familiar idea in Bengali. The greatest change, all things considered, has been with regard to religion, the question of the other world ; mere authority as such has been at a discount, there have been attempts at explaining or defending religion by means of rationalism ; the historical outlook has grown, a new mystical conception introduced, and several attempts made—mainly due to contact with the west—towards toleration of other religions and *Samanvaya* or harmonising of differing creeds.

It speaks volumes of the marvellous capacity of Bengali language and literature that it has been able to assimilate so much within so short a time as a century. For in the life and growth of a nation, a century is not a long period, as there is considerable

difference between an individual and a people. For such distant nations, for such distinctly different literatures, for cultures in some respects widely removed from each other, to have mingled and grown and mixed in the two currents that flowed in each other—is one of the wonderful subjects that can be studied with interest and profit. Western influence in Bengali literature is one aspect of such a study, and the student cannot fail to be struck by the rich receptivity of the Bengali mind which has succeeded in making its own the new forms and ideas which belonged to the west and grew there in the process of centuries. Considerable have been the results, but how far-reaching they will be, may be still a matter of debate.

The richness of the capacity of Bengali literature will appear better to our view and clearer if we compare the analogous cases—the cases of other Indian vernaculars—and consider how far they have gained from such an impact. A typical case is available in Urdu literature, and it is quite convenient too, because the subject has been studied with care and the result published by Prof. Sayyid Abdul Latif of the Osmania University, Hyderabad. There we find that the influence of English was mainly responsible for the prose compositions, but that in verse there had been no new and permanent incorporations;\* an attempt to write a blank verse drama in imitation of Shakespeare was an ignominious failure; but that in the choice of subjects and the method of

\* "Barring these few spasmodic and apparently inadequate attempts very little has been done to incorporate into the system of Urdu prosody any new forms from English versification"—Sayyid Abdul Latif's *Influence of English Literature on Urdu Literature*, p. 72.

treatment, there had been considerable advance. So far as the new ideas are concerned, much, undoubtedly, was due to English literature; the spirit of freedom in political, social and religious life and in literature as well, because there were the shackles of convention to cast off; the spirit of enquiry and search after truth which included the study of history and a scientific curiosity; the more complex attitude towards man and nature; the spirit of progress identified as a trait of modern western civilisation—all these have steadily grown in Urdu literature. But in Bengal the harvest has been richer still, though at the same time the faculty of criticism has been more strongly exercised, and to verse forms there have been numerous additions both in metre, and in stanza, in prosody and kind. This has no doubt its explanation; but it is necessary to say at the same time that the receptivity of the Bengali mind deserves some credit for it.

Who will say that this receptivity has been all for good? It has resulted in the addition of new forms, in the incorporation of new ways of viewing nature, man and God, but each advance of this nature has led to a divergence between the educated and the uneducated, a widening of the gulf between those who have received English education and those who have not. The gulf is there in other countries as well; the break between the past and the present generation has to be understood, and it is not understood generally by either. Robert Louis Stevenson makes the same complaint.\* This natural difference has

\* *Memories and Portraits* (First essay).

been-increased in the case of Bengal, and however rapidly education might spread, the receptivity itself would be a cause of difficulty and create differences. The songs of Ram Prasad now appeal to one class of readers ; to the other, they are a source of disgust. Bankim Chandra saw this in his time and he wanted his *Bangadarshan* to be the connecting link between the two. Those who received the new education should impart it, in their turn, to those who were ignorant,—this was his idea. Fifty years have passed by, but his mission, the mission of his *Bangadarshan*, still remains unfulfilled. It is the newness of the education that is at the root of this lack of understanding.

Apart from this difficulty of comprehension which exists among the mass of readers, there is another factor to be considered. It is the resultant attitude to life and thought. Acquaintance with the forms of the sonnet, the ode, the elegy is not the highest gain ; trying to view man, nature and God as others view them, however successful the attempt, is at best a lesson at copying ; and the success of the attempt is itself a danger, because it offers temptation against an independent outlook on life. Richness of form may but conceal the poverty of spirit. In the case of western influence in Bengali literature, is not the influence so great, productive of so many new forms and ideas, that the spirit of the literature has been impoverished, that the mind of the men, of the men of letters, has suffered from lack of real strength which can only come from originality?

The problem, thus stated, ceases to be merely literary and becomes educational, and social in a

larger sense. To exercise the gift of prophecy is dangerous here, but it may be affirmed at the same time that the literature has in it sufficient native strength to wean itself from mere imitation and to seek its own way through the ages. To this end, reaction evidenced from time to time has been a great help. We may mention here a few strong opinions, strongly against the wholesale or uncritical adoption of western influence in literature.

The strongest condemnation has come from Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das, who sounded a note of warning, if not alarm, in his *Kāvya Kathā*. From the beginnings to a poet like Krishna Kamal Goswami, the literature shows an organic unity. Why, he asks, is this sense of unity blurred in modern Bengali poetry? Shall we lose the soul of the poetry by attending too much to European literature?\* To him the contact of the west has appeared in the nature of a catastrophe: "At the new advent of the west in Bengal, at its glare, the lamp of Bengal went out, its wick had dried up. Bengal has always seen the sun rise in the east, the sudden lightning-flash in the western sky blinded its eyes, it seemed to be in a swoon. The life of its life closed its portals."† There is so much vital difference

\* 'ইউরোপীয় সাহিত্যে মন ডুবাইয়া দিয়া আমরা কি শেষে বাঙ্গালা কবিতার যে প্রাণ তাহাই হারাইয়া ফেলিব?'—কাব্যের কথা, ১০ পৃঃ।

† 'বঙ্গলয় প্রতীচ্যের নব আগমনে, তাহার আলোকে, তাহার বৃক্কের সলিতা শুধাইয়া গেল, বাঙ্গলার রূপ নিভিয়া আসিল। বাঙ্গলা চিরদিন পূর্বদিকেই সূর্য উঠিতে দেখিয়াছে, অকস্মাৎ পশ্চিম আকাশে বিজলী-বলকের মত আলোক দেখিয়া তাহার নয়নে ধাঁধা লাগিল, বাঙ্গলা একেবারে মুহূর্ত্তানুহীত হইয়া পড়িল। তাহার প্রাণের ভিতরে যে প্রাণ ছিল, যে তখন তাহার প্রাণপট বন্ধ করিয়া দিল।'—কাব্যের কথা, ৩৭ পৃঃ।

between the two minds that the modern Bengali literature, grown only through imitation, is artificial, insincere, and therefore of no count at all. He felt that the life of Bengal must be freed from this artificial, hybrid literature, and all resources should be utilised to make the heart of Bengal speak out, otherwise all its strength is being used up for nothing.\*

In his condemnation of western influence, Das does not stand alone. Raj Narayan, years ago, harped on the same string. Nabin Chandra, speaking of Bankim Chandra's influence in Bengali society through his imaginary creations, remarked again and again about its baneful working. "Bankim Babu is immortal in Bengali literature; his novels contain much excellence in technique and ideals, but there is no model character. The world does not hold such models of father, son, brother, sister, mother, daughter and even servant as may be found in every Indian home, thanks to the *Rāmāyan* and the *Mahābhārat*. By his uncommon genius Bankim Babu has destroyed these models, has not been able to build any.....His novels are excellent by their European standard, but, judged by the Indian, are not good as literature." † Bankim Chandra and Rabindra Nath have been both careful

\* 'এই ভাবের অপচয়ের দিনে, কেবল সাহিত্য ও জীবনের দিনে সমগ্র শক্তিকে একবার অন্তর্গুণী করি। বাঙ্গলার সেই প্রাণের প্রাণকে খুঁজিয়া বাহির করিতে হইবে।'—কাব্যের কথা, ৭৪ পৃঃ।

+ "বঙ্গসাহিত্যে বহুই বাবু অমর। তাঁহার উপস্থাসগুলিতে অতি উচ্চ শিল্প ও শিক্ষা আছে। কিন্তু আদর্শ চরিত্র নাই। রামায়ণ মহাভারতের কল্যাণে ভারতের গৃহে গৃহে যে আদর্শ-পিতা, আদর্শ-পুত্র, আদর্শ-ভ্রাতা, আদর্শ-ভগিনী, আদর্শ-মাতা, আদর্শ-কন্যা, এমন কি আদর্শ-কৃত্য পর্য্যন্ত আছে, তাহা জগতে নাই।

against senseless or servile imitation of western models, and both of them repeatedly held that where there was no touch with life, there could be no assimilation and, in such cases, the critical faculty must be exercised to gain full advantage from the contact of the east and the west. Bhudeb had his eye more on the society than on the literature; yet he entered into an emphatic defence of the eastern way in matters literary and extolled the use of hyperbole and symbolism in the oriental fashion, as has been pointed out in the course of this book. The warnings of these critics have been useful in checking the course of Bengali literature towards mere translation and slavish imitation.

Will this influence be an abiding one, or will it vanish in the next few years, along with the growth of the critical spirit in the Bengali mind? Prof. Sylvain Levi, one of the most distinguished Orientalists (or rather let us say, “indologists”), is reported to have said with reference even to science (which, based on reasoning and inductive generalisation, is universal in its scope, not national), that “the East is freeing itself from its slavish devotion to western science and is beginning to develop along its own lines.”\* There have been

বঙ্কিম বাবু এ সকল আদর্শ তাঁহার অসাধারণ প্রতিভার আঘাতে বরং ভাঙ্গিয়াছেন—  
গড়িতে পারেন নাই।.....বঙ্কিমবাবুর উপজ্ঞাসগুলিন ইউরোপীয় উপজ্ঞাস হিসাবে  
উৎকৃষ্ট উপজ্ঞাস। ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের হিসাবে উৎকৃষ্ট সাহিত্য নহে।—আমার  
জীবন, চতুর্থভাগ, ২৭২ পৃঃ।

\* Reported in the *Statesman*, Sept. 4, 1928. Cf. also in the same report. “At one time western culture was despised by the East. Then dawned a kind of slavish admiration and the East followed step by step. But now they were beginning to recognise in Japan,



assurances that the east will never be the west ; that the Bengali will unlearn as quickly, at least, as he has learnt ; but when all is said and done, it is idle to speculate.

It may be said in conclusion, however, that Bengal has no need to fear any imminent loss of her late acquisitions ; for to all appearances they have come to stay, they have been properly assimilated and nationalised, and in the years to come she will go on adding laurel to laurel in her crown of glory. Nobody need have any fear about the loss of her personality at this sudden conquest of her citadel, for she has retained her personality and made what she borrowed her own. It was fortunate that there were persons at the helm in her course onward at the critical juncture, persons who were imbued with strong patriotism, sturdy commonsense, abundant critical spirit and sufficient grounding in the culture of the country—specially Bankim and Rabindra Nath—who saved her from mere slavish imitation and guided her to beneficial assimilation. Hence both Rabindra Nath and Pramatha Chaudhuri have expressed themselves strongly in favour of the view that Bengal has gained as a result of her coming in contact with the west, so far at least as literature is concerned, has become dynamic where it was static, and it should not seem out of place that the view of a cultured son of Bengal, indicating an optimistic outlook should be

at all events, that western sciences show traces of their own work and discover the proper application of their own gift. Young Japanese scientists.....were beginning to conduct their **researches** on a national basis."

quoted at some length as we come to the end of the book :

আমাদের মধ্যে অনেকে ভাবেন যে, যাহা কিছু পুরাতন, যাহা কিছু সাবেক, তাহাই কেবল দেশের জিনিষ। কৃতিবাস, কবিকঙ্কণ আমাদের দেশের পুরাতন পদার্থ। উত্তরকালে যাহা কিছু হইবে, তাহা যদি কৃতিবাসী ও কবিকঙ্কণী ছন্দে না হয়, কিংবা তাহার মধ্যে যদি আমাদের আধুনিক শিক্ষার কোন প্রবর্তনা দেখা যায়, তবে তাহা দেশের জিনিষ হইল না। তাহাকে বিদেশী আখ্যা দেওয়াই সঙ্গত, এবং তাহা দ্বারা আমাদের আত্মপরিচয়ের খর্ব্বতা ঘটে। জড়বস্তু সম্বন্ধে এ কথা বলা বাইতে পারে বটে, কারণ যাহা তাহার পূর্বের পরিচয়, তাহার উত্তর পরিচয়ও তাহাই; কিন্তু প্রাণবান্ পদার্থের যথার্থ পরিচয় পরিবর্তনের মধ্যেই প্রকাশ পায়। .....ইউরোপীয় সাহিত্যে যে প্রাণের স্পন্দন আছে, তাহার স্থলানিত ছন্দে আমাদের সাহিত্য ও স্পন্দিত হইয়া উঠিয়াছে, বঙ্কিমের প্রতিভা যখন এই বার্তা ঘোষণা করিল, তখনই বঙ্গসাহিত্যলক্ষীর উটজ-প্রাঙ্গণে আনন্দময় মঙ্গলশঙ্খ বাজিয়া উঠিল। ....স্তুতিনিন্দার জন্ত তখনও আগাদিগকে পশ্চিমাভিমুখী হইয়াই থাকিতে হইত। তখনও আমরা মিল্, বেঙ্কাম, কঁোত, মিল্টন, বাইরন, স্কটের মধ্য দিয়া জগৎজের সমস্ত পদার্থ দেখিতাম; কারণে অকারণে যদি কখনও আমাদের পাশ্চাত্য গুরুর প্রতি তীব্র কটাক্ষ করিয়াছি, তথাপি সেই ঐক্যত্বের দ্বারা আমাদের হৃদয়ে বন্ধনদশাই স্থচিত হইয়াছে; রাগ এবং ঘেঘ উভয়ের দ্বারাই আমরা পুনঃ পুনঃ সপ্রমাণ করিতাম যে, তখনও আমাদের মুক্তি ঘটে নাই, গুরুতর প্রভাব আমাদের উপর যথেষ্ট পরিমাণেই আছে। .....এইজন্ত তখনকার সাহিত্যের মূলদেশ আমাদের দেশের মাটির সহিত সংলগ্ন ছিল না, সে যেন “অরকিডের” মত আর এক গাছে উচ্চশাখায় ঝুলিতেছিল। সে সাহিত্য যে প্রাণবান্ তাহাতে বিন্দুমাত্রও সন্দেহ নাই; কিন্তু তাহার প্রাণরস অত্র দেশের সাহিত্যরস হইতে সঞ্চারিত হইত।—( ১৩২০, রঙ্গপুর সাহিত্য পরিষৎ পত্রিকা, জগদীন্দ্র নাথের অভিভাষণ। )

“ Many of us think that whatever is old and antiquated belongs to literature. Krittivas and

Kavikankan are antiquities of our country. Whatever will grow in later times, if not after the model of Krittivas and Kavikankan, or if showing some trace of our modern education, will not be an indigenous product; it will be fair to dub it foreign and that will cause a shrinking of our soul. Of material things this can no doubt be asserted, for they do not grow, they remain what they had been. But we know a living thing really and only through its change.....When Bankim's genius proclaimed that the beat of life in European literature marked our literature also by its sweet melody, then did the joyous and auspicious conches resound through the cottage grounds of the Bengali Muse.....Even then we had to turn to the west for praise and blame. Even then we saw the things of the universe through Mill, Bentham, Comte, Milton, Byron and Scott: if we ever looked hard at our western teacher with or without reason, the haughtiness itself showed the bondage of our hearts; both through love and hate we repeatedly proved that even then we were not free, a strong and considerable influence was heavy on us.....For this reason the literature of those times was not radically connected with the soil of our country, but seemed to be hanging high on a tree, like orchids. There is not the slightest doubt that this literature had life in it; but, that life came to it from the literature of another country."

Another critic of our literature has testified to the drive that has resulted from the influence; our literature has got a push onward by reason of its impact with the west:

ইউরোপের সাহিত্য, ইউরোপের দর্শন, মনের গায়ে হাত বুলায় না, কিন্তু শাকা মারে। ইউরোপের সভ্যতা অমৃতট হোক, যদিরাই হোক,

আর হলাহলই হোক, ত'র ধর্মই হচ্ছে মনকে উত্তেজিত করা, স্থির থাকতে দেওয়া নয়। এই ইংরাজি-শিক্ষার প্রসাদে, এই ইংরাজি সভ্যতার সংস্পর্শে আমরা দেশভুক্ত লোক যেদিকে হোক কোনও একটা দিকে চলবার জ্ঞান এবং অজ্ঞকে চালাবার জ্ঞান আঁকুঁকি করছি। এক কথায় আমরা উন্নতিশীলই হই, আর অবনতিশীলই হই, আমরা সকলেই গতিশীল,—কেউ স্থিতিশীল নই।.....সুন্দরের আগমনে হীরা মালিনীর ভাঙ্গা মালধে যেমন ফুল ফুটে উঠেছিল, ইউরোপের আগমনে আমাদের দেশে তেমনি সাহিত্যের ফুল ফুটে উঠেছে।—(সবুজপত্র, ১ম বর্ষ, ১ম সংখ্যা)

“The literature of Europe, its philosophy, does not lull the mind, but gives it a push. The tendency of European civilisation, be it like nectar, or an intoxicant drink, or poison, is to excite the mind, not to allow it to remain calm and unmoved. By the grace of the English education, through the contact of this English civilisation, we, all the people of the country, are impatient to move ourselves and to guide others, in some direction whatever. In a word, we may be either for progress or for a retrograde movement, but we are all dynamic,—none of us are static .....Just as flowers bloomed on the broken hedges of Hira Malini at the advent of Sundar, so the flowers of literature have bloomed in our country at the advent of Europe.”—*Sabuj-Patra*, Vol. I, i.”

One more statement about the beneficial effect of western influence in Bengali literature.

That the breath of the west has whispered life into the dormant spirit of Bengali literature has been acknowledged by the supreme literary artist of the age, who traces the awakening to the new influence :

ইংরেজি শিক্ষা সোনার কাঠির মত আমাদের জীবনকে স্পর্শ করিয়াছে, সে আমাদের ভিতরকার বাস্তবকেই জাগাইল, এই বাস্তবকে

যে লোক ভয় করে, যে লোক বাঁধা-নিয়মের শিকলটাকেই শ্রেয় বলিয়া জানে, তারা ইংরেজই হউক আর বাঙ্গালীই হউক, এই শিক্ষাকে ভ্রম এবং এই জাগরণকে অবাস্তব বলিয়া উড়াইয়া দিবার ভাণ করিতে থাকে। তাহাদের বাঁধাতর্ক এই যে, এক দেশের আঘাত আর-এক দেশকে সচেতন করে না। কিন্তু দূর-দেশের দক্ষিণে হাওয়ায় দেশান্তরে সাহিত্য-কুঞ্জে ফুলের উৎসব জাগাইয়াছে ইতিহাসে তাহার প্রমাণ আছে। যেখান হইতে যেমন করিয়াই হউক জীবনের আঘাতে জীবন জাগিয়া উঠে, মানব-চিন্তা-তত্ত্বে ইহা একটি চিরকালের বাস্তব ব্যাপার।—(সবুজপত্র, ১ম বর্ষ, ৪র্থ সংখ্যা)

“ English education has touched our life like the ‘ golden wand ’ (of the folk tales), it has only aroused the reality in us ; the man who fights shy of this reality, who knows the chain of convention to be the only good, whether he is a Bengali or an Englishman, pretends to ignore this education as a mistake and this awakening as unreal. The stereotyped argument of such people is that the impact of one country does not rouse another to consciousness. But history contains evidence that the south breeze blowing from a foreign, far-off country has called forth the jubilation of flowers in the literary groves of another. However, it may be and from whatever source, life is called forth by the blow of life, this is a reality for all times in the affairs of human mind.”  
—*Sabuj-Patra*, Vol. I, iv.

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